University of Alberta

Decolonization and desire: Isaac Julien's *Looking for Langston* and the work of Frantz Fanon

by

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In 2003, twenty-one South Asian men were arrested in Toronto and a majority of them were deported under Project Thread, a Royal Canadian Mounted Police project of racial profiling and racist policing initiated after 9-11[1]. American and British troops invaded and occupied Iraq, despite international protests against U.S. imperialism[2]. And, at present, Aboriginal activists at Secwepemc (British Columbia) are organizing to protect their lands from being appropriated and exploited by corporations[3]. These are just three snap shots of struggles in Canada and abroad. In this political landscape of racism and continued colonial violence, I need to ask myself: how might I work through, think about and organize under these changing yet persistent political circumstances? What have writers in other colonial periods said about living and speaking against colonial domination? Frantz Fanon (1952, 1961) has written about the inner struggles of black men under colonialism and about Third World organizing against global European domination. His writings not only offer a powerful analysis of colonialism, they also capture a spirit of resistance against colonialism in the '50s and '60s. For queer activists of colour who are interested in creative forms of resistance, though, I wondered as well how decolonization movements could be queered and imagined differently from Fanon's ideas of decolonization. I then turned to Isaac Julien's *Looking for Langston* for ideas. What follows is an exploratory introduction that runs through the present political moment and the possible relevance of Fanon's and Julien's works in the (changing) present moment. I also raise questions around how connections between queer and anti-colonial movements and theories might be made. Fanon's and Julien's works then prompted me to pursue these questions by considering theories of desire. What I suggest

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[1] For more information, please see the Project Threadbare site at http://threadbare.tyo.ca.
[2] Please see Melisa Brittain's article.
[3] For more information please see www.turtleisland.org/news/news-secwepemc.htm.

in this introduction and the chapters that follow is that Julien's *Looking* offers a visual poetics/politics of resistant desire(s) and of decolonization. Julien engages with Fanon's questions of black masculinity, writing history and building international solidarities, and war and death through this visual poetics and politics.

Colonialism and the visual: Fanon and Julien in the present political moment

In *Black Skin, White Masks* Frantz Fanon draws attention to the place of visuality in colonial domination. When Fanon asserts that "a drama is enacted every day in colonized countries" (*Black Skin*145), Homi Bhabha astutely suggests that Fanon's theatrical metaphor of drama evokes "the scene" and this in turn emphasizes "the seen" or the visible in colonial relations of power (76). For Bhabha, Fanon's colonial dramas—or the scene and seen—"refer at once to the site of fantasy and desire and to the sight of subjectification and power" (ibid.).

The doubled workings of visuality under colonial domination that Bhabha describes above of the scene and seen, sites of fantasy and sights of subjectification, can be read as speaking to the present political conjunction of the American imperial invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq. Melisa Brittain's essay "Liberation Fantasy Revised" captures the workings of colonial discourse and the visual representations of war and imperialism in present-day Iraq. Brittain examines a photograph (a seen or scene from this present political moment) featured in the *Globe and Mail* during April 2003 of a white British female solider stationed in Iraq, bashfully receiving a flower from an Iraqi man. The American and British led imperial war against Saddam Hussein's Iraq, writes Brittain, repeats the orientalist discourse of the west saving the east from eastern despotism, but this discourse is "revised" since in its present configuration Arab men,

who are usually constructed as "oppressive despots", must somehow be constructed as victims of eastern masculine despotism in order to be saved by the white west, in this case by white women (12). Brittain draws attention to the visual representations of war, imperialism and colonial domination by reading the orientalism of media images of Iraq. Orientalism is precisely concerned with the "mode of representation of otherness", writes Bhabha drawing on Said (71), pointing out once again the visuality of colonialism that Fanon's work suggests.

John Berger, in his book *Ways of Seeing*, similarly traces the political thrust of images, art and the visual in Western history. In his discussion of images that are considered works of art, Berger contends that art images are evaluated with particular assumptions about "Beauty, Truth" and so on (11). These assumptions are congruent with relations of power where ruling classes produce art to justify their role as rulers: "the art of the past is being mystified", writes Berger, "because a privileged minority is striving to invent a history which can retrospectively justify the role of the ruling classes" (ibid.). Berger examines a two-volume study of the painter Frans Hals to demonstrate how this mystification is produced and sustained. Berger goes on to examine the tradition of the oil painting where he astutely points out that oil paintings reached their apogee during European expansion and colonization (1500-1900) (83). Oil paintings rendered animals and particular peoples as objects, property and possessions, paralleling the exchange of commodities that occurred during colonization (ibid.). Berger's analysis of the power relations and politics that inhere in images and the visual may be read then as extending Fanon's and Bhabha's discussion of the seen and scenes of colonialism that enact and re-produce relations of power.

But why the return to Fanon at this present political moment? What does Fanon have to offer or say? Why is his work of interest to studies of post-coloniality? Firstly, the occupation of Iraq and the workings of power at the level of images (which Brittain's work examines and which the release of visual documents of Iraqi prisoner abuse reveals), speaks to Fanon's concern with visuality, looking relations and power. As well, Fanon's writing on colonial domination and the features of colonialism, and his discussion of decolonizing struggles especially in *Wretched of the Earth*, continue to describe present day colonial relations of power. When Fanon writes that "[t]he colonial world is a world divided into compartments" (37) or quarters for natives and Europeans, he can be read as describing the continued spatialization of colonial segregation here in Canada through the reserve system. Fanon's assertion that these divided compartments imply force, its frontiers marked by police stations and coercion (38) also resonates with the building of the wall in the occupied territories of Palestine. These are just some of the features of the present—and continued—configurations of colonialism to which Fanon's work points.

A further engagement with Fanon's work can be found with the Mirage exhibit. Coinciding with the 70th anniversary of Fanon's birth, the Mirage exhibit was held at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London from May-July 1995. The exhibit, preceded by a conference entitled "Working with Fanon: Contemporary Politics and Cultural Reflection", dealt with the influence of Fanon's work on filmmakers and artists, as well as writers (Tawadros and Dexter 13). In his introductory text for the Mirage exhibit's publication, Kobena Mercer contends that Fanon's pursuit of decolonizing "interior spaces" is a question that postcolonial artists have taken up today and have "extend[ed]

by seeking to alter the constitutive role of representation in the social construction of subjectivity" ("Busy"). For Stuart Hall, the revival of Fanon's work is part of an "over-determined 'return of the repressed'" which perhaps speaks to the "interior spaces" of colonization to which Mercer draws attention ("After-life" 14).

Another present-day interest in Fanon's work concerns the connection Fanon draws between racism and "the scopic drive - the eroticization of the pleasure in looking" and the "look" that comes from the "'other'" (Hall, "After-life" 16). Like Mercer, Hall also claims that Fanon's concern with the inner dimensions of colonialism and the task of creating a new subject, to decolonize the mind, is particularly useful especially for artists (ibid. 19). Hall explains that contemporary artists of the black diaspora are engaged with interventions in the field of "representation and subjectivity" for this is "*constitutive* of the politics of decolonization" (ibid.). Like Fanon, black artists are discussing the fixing of identity and they are working on questions relating to black bodies (Hall, "After-life 20). This discussion of visual representation, suggests Hall, initiates a discussion on the look, the sexualization of the look and the look as a locus of power/knowledge (ibid.).

Isaac Julien, like Hall, also attributes the renewed interest in and the resurgence of Fanon's work to a return of the repressed, noting that Third World revolutions have become dictatorships riddled with "violent ethnic determinism" ("Visualizing" 55). This return of the repressed is a trauma that blacks and whites experience, contends Julien, and this psychic trauma from an "unreconciled history" between blacks and whites is "still being worked through" today (ibid.). The question of interior decolonization and the return of the repressed which have contributed to Fanon's revival, speak to Mercer's point that Fanon's dream of decolonization has not been realized on the terrain of

sexuality after the victory of, what the latter calls, "'external decolonization'" or nation-state independence ("Busy" 35). Mercer asks "[w]hat happens to a dream deferred?", to which he also replies: "It might explode in your face" (ibid.). In other words, Mercer's remarks and questions seem to open up a discussion of how sexuality is talked about or not talked about in Fanon's politics of decolonization.

The entanglements of sexuality[4], looking relations and colonialism that Fanon discusses reverberate in the present political moment. Returning to Brittain's essay, cited above, colonial looking relations produce and are themselves produced by a "revised" colonial "liberation fantasy" steeped in colonial discourses of sexuality. In this fantasy, the white British female solider acts as a "help-mate" of male colonizers but her presence in the colonies is fraught with an anxiety of possible "'interracial' relationships" with native men (11). In a similar vein, Abdel-Shehid writes that security *is* the selling of intimacy itself through "the policing of race, sexuality, and alterity"(4, 6), as evidenced in a recent spate of suburban dystopia films but which also finds articulation in urban centres. Here, Abdel-Shehid brings attention to a telling conversation between three young men at a café in Toronto's "queer village" where one of the young men, who is Arab Canadian, asks his white Canadian friend whether he thinks Bin Laden is cute, to which the friend replies: "'What kind of sick question is that?'"(5). The conversation is striking because it speaks to the "selling of intimacy as security"; the question deals with intimacy (that is, "personal" evaluations of who is "cute") but it reveals how American and British imperialist military security interests in Iraq, in particular, construct Arab

[4] Sexuality is metaphorically denoted here as *interior spaces* but sexuality is of course always tied to the "exterior" or social. I am using this term here because the language of decolonization may be popularly understood to imply institutions such as governments and finance, ignoring the intimate, interior spaces of our emotions, feelings, "identity" and so on. These "interior spaces", again, are touched by the social which I will discuss later in a section on theories of desire.

masculinity as always a threat to capitalist security (Abdel-Shehid 6). I would suggest that American, or more broadly corporate western interests, "sell" ideas of capitalist security through a variety of means, one of which includes the corporate media. By using xenophobic and racist discourses about the 'east', the selling of security filters into our intimate conversations and languages about desire and so on. The return of the repressed, the questions of sexuality that are not worked through or raised, the interior spaces that remain colonized and the persistence of colonial discourses of sexuality in the present political moment may point to a renewed interest in Fanon's work, however, I would suggest that we turn to another author/artist also who grapples with questions of sexuality, identities, colonialism and interior decolonization: Isaac Julien.

Isaac Julien's short film *Looking for Langston* (1989) is a rich and provocative text about the interior spaces of colonization; in this sense the film can be considered a theory rendered visually or a filmic text that works with some of Fanon's concerns with interior spaces and sexuality. Through the filmic medium, Julien extends Bhabha's discussion of the scene and seen of colonial domination, evident in Fanon's work: While colonial power may work on the level of images and the visual to produce and shape colonial subjects, it is through the visual that colonial subjects can perhaps work against colonial power and representations. *Looking for Langston* (hereafter shortened to *Looking*) cannot easily be summarized because it resists being contained and closed by a singular description: it is a complex film composed of layers of meanings that open up to multiple readings. To consider *Looking* as a text that parallels Fanon's work I follow Fisher's point that *Looking* is a "film essay" that constructs an argument for what might have happened during the Harlem Renaissance (but which is not currently part of the

"official" history of the Renaissance), such as the cultivation of "same-sex" relationships (66). This attempt to make theory through the visual is evident in Julien's other films. For example in an interview with Coco Fusco, Julien explains that he attempted to visualize Fanon's theory in his film *Black Skin/White Masks* (*BS/WM*) by exploring the "relationship between film and critical theory" (55), an endeavor that also permeates *Looking*. Julien notes Donna Haraway's comment on *BS/WM* in which she states that the film made "an act of visualization a form of theoretical production" (ibid.). Julien also brings attention to the work of other filmmakers who visualize theory such as Eisenstein on montage, the British avant garde cinemas of the late 1970s and early 1980s, and the work of Trinh T. Minh-ha (ibid.). While colonialism and orientalism produce knowledges of "the other" through colonial looking relations (Bhabha 71), Julien's work does not simply visualize existing written theories, he produces a theory through the visual against colonial knowledge production. But there is also something about the visual that cannot be reproduced and articulated in written theories. For example, Gen Doy suggests that visual culture compared with written theories represents meanings in a different way, if not in ways that are "more seduct[ive]" than written texts (214). Julien's *Looking* will be treated as a theoretical filmic text in this paper, which produces multiple meanings and enables multiple readings. The power of the visual that Julien's work mobilizes speaks to Berger's point that "[s]eeing comes before words", that is, the visual is registered by humans before they are able to grasp words (7).

It is precisely through the visual medium of film that Julien is able to intervene in the circulation of colonial scenes and seens, or colonial visual productions and representations, and by extension colonial knowledges. And it is precisely this political

intervention into the visual realm of colonialism that forms part of a decolonizing struggle both "internally" and "externally". This political intervention into the visual is asserted by Mercer and Julien who point out that "politics always entails a struggle over representation" ("Race" 101). Julien re-writes and subverts several colonial scenes by restaging them and by employing several representational strategies (discussed in more detail in chapters one and two). Briefly, one such intervention into the visual realm of colonialism is Julien's infusion of desire into the images in *Looking* (Bravmann 320). The visual circulation of desire in *Looking* specifically targets Fanon's concern with interior spaces, or what Fuss (1994) refers to in the title of her essay as "interior colonies". Fanon, like, Julien also makes desire a central part of his work, especially in *Black Skin, White Masks* writes Mercer, who draws attention to Fanon's question cited at the beginning of *Black Skin*: "What does the black man want?" ("Busy" 35). Julien's filmic intervention into colonial representations is part of a decolonizing struggle and politics, and through the infusion of desire into *Looking*'s images, Julien also enters and attempts to decolonize the interior spaces that Fanon's work signals.

While I explained the reasons for the renewed interest in Fanon's work by briefly touching on how Fanon speaks to the present, I have not mentioned why we ought to consider Julien's work, except for proposing that it replies to Fanon's concern with interior spaces and colonial representations. I will address this by first drawing a connection between Fanon's and Julien's work through Edward Said's notion of traveling theory. In summary, Said's "Traveling Theory Reconsidered" revisits and recalls his first essay on traveling theory and explains that theories sometimes "travel" and lose their initial power and subversiveness simply because later versions of the theory cannot

reproduce its original power. According to Said, the situation or context has changed and the theory is, as a result, "degraded and subdued" (197). Said considers how *History and Class Consciousness* by early 20th century Hungarian revolutionary Lukacs "travels". Lukacs, explains Said, was involved with social upheavals (198). When Lukacs's work "travels" his work enters a different sphere of concerns and/or a different region (Said 214). Using traveling theory as a lens, then, we might say that Fanon's work has traveled to Julien's production studio and it has been taken up, even transformed by Julien. This movement/traveling and transformation of Fanon's work by Julien is a concern for this paper, however I will modify Said's traveling theory to speak to the concerns that Julien raises.

Fanon's involvement with the Algerian war of independence is arguably similar to Lukac's involvement with revolutionary social upheavals. Fanon was in the thick of an anti-colonial war as a psychiatrist at the Blida-Joinville hospital in Algeria curing both Algerian and French patients. Fanon later attended the Accra meeting for African anti-colonial struggles. Fanon's works, especially *Wretched of the Earth*, *A Dying Colonialism*, and his writings in *Toward the African Revolution*, speak to this revolutionary moment in Algeria and even the rest of Africa and the Third World. The revolutionary contexts and insurgent thrust of Fanon's work is clear; however I would also bring attention to the radical politics and period of social upheaval in Britain that characterizes Julien's work. For example, Mercer and Julien explain that their writing (referring specifically to a set of essays in *Male Order*) emerged from their involvement in the Gay Black Group in London in 1981. The group included Asian, African and Caribbean descended gay men in London. Mercer and Julien explain that 1981 was a

particularly critical time when black people resisted Thatcher's hegemony and policing policies of the 1980s ("Race" 97). Through their involvement with the Gay Black Group, Mercer and Julien explain that they felt empowered through the formation of a black gay collective identity, and as well, they overcame their feelings of isolation and marginality (ibid.). They write that "[p]olitics is about making connections" between different communities and categories (of 'race', gender, class, sexuality and so on) (ibid.). Julien's work is steeped in this history of anti-racist struggle in Britain.

Fanon and Julien are, of course, writing in different time periods and contexts but I would not suggest that Fanon's work becomes diluted because Julien engages with Fanon's writings and concerns in his own political moment. In fact, I would suggest that traveling adds further layers of complexity and questions to a theory and writer's work, translating the work into the present political moment. The traveling or movement of Fanon's work to Julien's political location can perhaps also be described as a question of diaspora and diasporic work (a concern that will be discussed in chapter two). Mercer's assertion that Julien's work considers the question of sexuality as a site from which to open up complexity, noting also that "sexual politics" itself is "the interior limit of decolonization", ("Decolonisation" 119) points to the lacunae and the unsettling questions that are not asked, addressed or considered in Fanon's work but which are instead taken up by Julien with greater intensity. In other words, the revolutionary and incisive thrust of Fanon's work does not necessarily diminish by traveling and being worked on by Julien. Julien in fact makes Fanon's work potentially more insurgent by adding more layers of analyses and complexities to it.

Returning to questions of why Julien ought to be considered at this present political moment, then, I would suggest that Julien's work brings together and works with two, oddly separate, fields of inquiry and activism: postcolonial and queer studies and their respective movements. The problems with the separation of the two can be seen throughout this paper, however, I want to bring attention to a recent debate at a 2004 World Social Forum workshop which exemplifies these potential problems. This workshop, organized by Bombay Dost (a queer organization) and other grassroots queer organizers, dealt with the difficulties of building alliances between queer movements and other progressive groups in Bombay. The discussion at the workshop focused not only on the difficulties of building alliances in Bombay, but also the marginalization of the workshop itself and the difficulties faced by the Bombay Dost organizers at the WSF became a recurring topic for discussion. I would flag attention to what it might mean to marginalize Bombay Dost and their work at the Forum: Briefly, this marginalization renders queer movements as separate and less pressing in relation to the counter-neoliberal thrust of the WSF[5]. And this is symptomatic of the sort of thinking and social activisms that pose queer movements as separate from anti-colonial struggles[6].

This separation between anti-colonial politics and queer politics became evident to me as I began to read Fanon's work. Initially, this research project was motivated by a desire to explore the reasons why Fanon's work was and still is considered important to Third World struggles and postcolonial theory, but Fanon's troubling gender and sexual politics became important to explore and interrogate. At this point, Julien's provocative

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[5] As a side note, I would suggest here that counter-neoliberal politics are very much congruent with anti-colonial struggles since both engage with the multiple levels (national and global, for example) of power relations and struggles.

[6] It is interesting to note that feminist movements and gender issues were an inextricable part of the WSF but queer issues on the otherhand were not as widely acknowledged at the Forum.

film *Looking for Langston* became a tempting visual text that could offer a new reading of Fanon's work through a queer lens and move beyond Fanon by posing questions around colonialism, gender, 'race', and sexuality as they are furthermore tied to questions of desire. By considering Fanon's and Julien's work, then, this research sought to explore, and perhaps even intervene in and respond to, the separation between feminist, queer movements and anti-colonial politics. To address this curious separation, several writers have proposed that we think of the "postcolonial queer" which I turn to below.

Studies that bridge queer and postcolonial theories point to the underlying similarities between the two fields of inquiry, demonstrating the productiveness of thinking across both fields. Hawley, in his introduction to an edited book on the intersections between the postcolonial and queer, questions the dichotomy that suggests that queer studies is white and elitist, and that postcolonial studies is homophobic (1). The fields, however, are both concerned with destabilizing western thought, asserts Hawley, bringing attention to their similarities (4). In a similar vein, Holden in his essay "Rethinking Colonial Discourse Analysis and Queer Studies", identifies two parallel concerns in both fields. The first concerns the similarities between their methodological approaches; here Holden cites the example of Bhabha's idea of mimicry and Butler's notion of performativity (303). For the second, Holden identifies their similar concerns with historical contexts rather than with theory. For example, both fields are interested in the late 19th century, a time, which Foucault points out, when the category "homosexual" was created (Holden 304). The late 19th century also saw the "rise of the New Imperialism, the apogee of the territorial division of the world among the industrialized powers, and the concomitant rise of modern nationalist movements" (Holden 305).

Furthermore, both fields are concerned with liberation movements such as decolonization struggles and queer activism after Stonewall, writes Holden (ibid.). Otalvaro-Hormillosa's essay on Fanon, Mercer and Julien's work is a stunning example of how the two fields can merge together productively. She covers the orientalism in queer porn, reviews Mercer's re-reading of Mapplethorpe's photographs of black men, and reads the ambivalence in Fanon's gender and sexual politics leading her to point out that Fanon can be read as both homophobic or homoerotic (102). The most compelling part of Otalvaro-Hormillosa's essay is her discussion of Julien's film *The Attendant* where she contends that Julien critically engages with questions of colonial domination, slavery, fetishism and s/m practices (106). Later, she argues that Mercer and Julien are concerned with Fanonian notions of colonial violence and the relationship between the white man and the black man (108) but I would add that Mercer and Julien, unlike Fanon, do so through a queer lens. Following Otalvaro-Hormillosa's lead, I submit that Julien's film *Looking for Langston*, bridges both postcolonial and queer theories and their respective movements, a move that is indeed needed at this moment.

Returning to the Bombay Dost workshop as a recent example of the sort of bridges and discussions that need to be activated, a move that can emerge from an analysis of Fanon's and Julien's work together, I suggest a need to look beyond a discussion of simply merging postcolonial and queer theories and approach both Fanon's and Julien's work in terms of questions of desire itself. The Mirage exhibit's interest in Fanon's engagement with the sexualization of looking relations and Julien's concern with infusing desire, specifically queer desires, in the visual landscape of *Looking*, as discussed above, prompt me to consider questions of desire when reading both Fanon's

and Julien's work. Firstly, taking Julien's work into account, I want to consider how queer desires might help us to (re)think questions of desire and political activisms more broadly. Here, I take Grosz's lead in rethinking desire by focusing on her discussion of lesbian desire.

Re-thinking desire

Grosz's re-conceptualization of desire first asks how feminism can rethink lesbian desire by moving beyond psychoanalysis and other theories of desire that position male desire as a central concern. Writing in the early 1990s, Grosz argues that desire has been conceived as a "lack" by theorists such as Hegel, whom Fanon draws on (Grosz 72). The notion of desire as lack is concerned with the desire of the other or an object of desire; in this sense Freud considered desire on "negative terms" as an absence that ought to be fulfilled (ibid). This idea of "desire as an absence", contends Grosz, works well with capitalism and notions of property, ownership and consumption (ibid.). The negative coding of desire means that it is attributed to femininity where women are the objects of desire instead of desiring subjects, and this conception of desire supports a model of women and men as complementary mates (Grosz 72). This theory of desire is uncritically derived from the institution of patriarchal marriage in which women are objects of exchange between men, so queer desires are rendered unthinkable (ibid. 73). To challenge this model of desire, Grosz proposes theorizing desire as a production and not as a lack (74). Desire is not about an object that must be obtained, but instead the processes that produce it (ibid.). Drawing on Spinoza, Grosz writes that "reality does not prohibit desire, but is produced by it. Desire is the force of *positive production, the energy that creates things, makes alliances and forges interactions between things*"

(italics mine, 75). In this sense, desire is social. It brings things together and builds perhaps even activist alliances. Grosz supports Deleuze and Guattari's conception of desire and suggests that it can be used to rethink lesbian desire. Desire according to Deleuze and Guattari experiments and makes; again desire is full, positive, immanent, productive and it is about actualization, practices, energies, excitations, and action (75, 78). Other sites of desire and forms of sexuality and relationships ought to be contemplated, writes Grosz, citing examples such as a writer's relationship to pen and paper, the body-builder's relationship to weights, the bureaucrat to files -- in other words"[t]he bedroom is no more the privileged site of sexuality than any other space: sexuality and desire are part of the intensity and passion of life itself" (Grosz 77). Grosz points out that this conceptualization of desire proposes that the spread, movement, intensity, patterns and effects of desire be studied rather than the objects of desire (79). Grosz's re-examination of theories of desire in relation to lesbian desire and her use of Deleuze and Guattari's idea of desire as flows open up possibilities for conceiving of desire in more emancipatory, revolutionary and inclusive terms which I will discuss further below by examining Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*.

Deleuze and Guattari's re-conceptualization of desire turns away from psychoanalysis and moves instead toward a "schizoanalysis" of desire by positing that desire is about movement and flows that are embedded in the social. Desire, they write, "constantly couples continuous flows and partial objects that are by nature fragmentary and fragmented. Desire causes the current to flow, itself flows in turn, and breaks the flows" (5). Deleuze and Guattari's notion of desire as flows, currents and movement may speak to the conception of social identities as fluid and constituted through movement.

They write that the subject is not at the centre, but passes through concentric circles that come together at the centre, at the desiring-machine (20). The subject, then, is at the periphery "with no fixed identity, forever decentered, *defined* by the states through which it passes"(ibid.). The problem with psychoanalytic models of desire, as Grosz pointed out above, is that they posit desire as lack "rather than a process of production, of 'industrial' production" (Deleuze and Guattari, 25-6). Under capitalism then, as summarized previously by Grosz but repeated here, the market economy consciously deploys desire as lack, suggesting that desire is supported by needs and it is this construction of "needs" which is in turn organized and controlled by the dominant class, contend Deleuze and Guattari (27-8). Here Deleuze and Guattari are pointing to the relations of power that mediate desire. Desires and needs are channeled, formed and molded by the dominant class compelling people to fear that their needs will not be satisfied (ibid.). Robert Young suggests that Deleuze and Guattari's model of desire is useful because they acknowledge the connection between the production of desire and social production, "[d]esire is a social rather than an individual product; it permeates the infrastructure of society" (168). That is, desire produces reality, or "desiring-production is one and the same thing as social production": Desire then is not simply a psychic reality separate from the social (Deleuze and Guattari, 30). This point seems to suggest that desire is itself socially produced, and this analysis may suggest a move away from discussions of whether particular constructions of sexuality are natural or not. Lastly, Deleuze and Guattari write that the social operates to control the flows of desire (33), an insight that they discuss in relation to the rise of fascism. This social control of the flows of desire furthermore resonate with the construction of consumer identities and consumer culture, and it also

speaks to ideas of compulsory heterosexuality where women's desires are shaped by heteronormative constructions of gender and sexuality.

Although Deleuze and Guattari's conception of desire as social points to the ways in which desire is channeled, controlled and mediated by unequal relations of power, their work emphasizes the positivity of desire and its revolutionary potential. They write that desire can be channeled towards a revolutionary desire as exemplified by the social utopias of the late nineteenth century (30). When desire is repressed, it is repressed because it can call into question existing social structures or regimes (Deleuze and Guattari 116). This is so because desire is explosive, desiring machines can only operate or assemble by "demolishing entire social sectors" (ibid.). Deleuze and Guattari assert that desire is essentially revolutionary, and real desire challenges structures of exploitation and hierarchies, but desire is repressed to make servitude and submission desirable (ibid.). This language of "real desire" and the revolutionary essence of desire is a bit worrisome since it seems to almost make desire an object, but Deleuze and Guattari's conception of desire as revolutionary is refreshing and exciting. They write that to say desire is revolutionary is not to suggest that desire is not about sexuality but instead that

> sexuality and love do not live in the bedroom of Oedipus, they dream instead of wide-open spaces, and cause strange flows to circulate that do not let themselves be stocked within an established order. (ibid.)

Again, desire is revolutionary "in its own right", as well, the authors emphasize the "positivity of the revolutionary movement or in the desiring-creativity" (116, 119). As Grosz mentioned earlier, desire does not involve an object, a person or thing "but the entire surroundings that it traverses, the vibrations and flows of every sort to which it is joined, introducing therein breaks and captures—an always nomadic and migrant desire"

(Deleuze and Guattari 292). Sexuality is everywhere and desire is always moving, creating, producing, and always threatening established social orders. It is from this conception of desire as movement, desire as flows that question, assemble and create alliances that I want to consider, use and proceed with because, as Deleuze and Guattari optimistically write, although desires can be channeled and controlled under particular regimes, the desires that can break these very forms of repression are immanent in repressive regimes themselves (63). The notion of a revolutionary thrust of desire, in particular, interests me here. This conception of desire as disruptive is, I believe, further elaborated by Hardt and Negri.

In *Empire*, Hardt and Negri discuss the formation of a new revolutionary body or force which they refer to as the multitude. Their discussion of the multitudes resonates with Deleuze and Guattari's notion of desire as revolutionary movement. Similar to Deleuze and Guattari's point that a resistant desire also emerges from repressive regimes, Hardt and Negri write that empire or "the new imperial terrain provides greater possibilities for creation and liberation" (218). Deleuze and Guattari's emphasis on movements of desire are reconstituted in *Empire* when Hardt and Negri write that nomadism and miscegenation challenge capitalist globalization for it is through circulation that "the human community is constituted" (362). For Hardt and Negri, the "heroes" of Third World liberation struggles are "the emigrants and the flows of population that have destroyed old and new boundaries"; they transgressed "territorial and racial boundaries" and destroyed particularisms, moving toward the common (362-3). The authors then go on to cite Fanon when they write that "the most wretched of the earth becomes the most powerful being, because its new nomad singularity is the most

creative force and the omnilateral movement of its desire is itself the coming liberation" (363). Hardt and Negri's discussion of movement and nomadism is ultimately linked to their call for a global citizenship that will change capital by allowing people to move and settle wherever they like (399-400).

Although I am wary of positing nomadism as the singular form of mass resistance especially in light of Bauman's discussion of tourists (to be briefly touched on in chapter two), Hardt and Negri's, Deleuze and Guattari's and Grosz's work seem to converge on this point of desire as a movement that entertains the possibility of forming activist alliances. It is active, it creates, it moves, *it brings people together*, and it questions. This conceptualization of desire forms the basis of this paper. When Hardt and Negri write that "corporeal relations and configurations of gender and sexuality" form one major terrain of resistance (215) they are affirming Julien's work and his focus on sexuality and race as terrains of struggle which I turn to below.

Toward a visual poetics/politics of resistant desire(s)

To synthesize the discussions above, both Fanon and Julien speak to the present political moment of imperial military aggression and occupation with its concomitant colonial representations of the other. This is the scene of violence and colonial domination. The notion of the scenes of colonialism, which Bhabha noted above in Fanon's work, not only brings attention to the sort of colonial rule that is enacted through unequal looking relations, but it also signals the visual, the field of representation as a site of decolonizing struggles. The Mirage exhibit, as mentioned earlier, engaged with the visuality of Fanon's work, specifically in *Black Skin, White Masks*. Using this unique visual approach to and analysis of Fanon's work, I place Fanon's work in conversation with Julien's visual text

or film *Looking*. While written texts, such as Fanon's, may perhaps be immediately and easily associated with theory, I would like to note here Mookerjea's reference to Deleuze's celebration of cinema's ability to "produce a shock that provokes thought" (116). Julien's *Looking* provokes such thought. While Fanon's work and his analyses of colonial domination and anti-colonial struggle initially framed the focus of my research, it soon shifted to the scenes of colonization and especially the scenes of decolonization represented *within* Fanon's work itself with an interest in interrogating Fanon's troubling gender and sexual politics. Ultimately this thesis seeks to examine what a challenging and resistant anti-colonialism might look like if it accounted for gender and sexual oppression as they are tied to racism and colonial relations of power. To address this concern, I examine what Julien's work suggests by way of an anti-colonial politics that seriously engages with feminist and queer movements, politics and analyses. Julien's *Looking* entered this research then as a visual text (a site of creativity) that could offer a different reading of Fanon's work and move beyond it by provoking challenging questions and thoughts around gender, 'race', and sexuality as they are furthermore tied to questions of desire –or a shock to further thought on anti-colonial and queer politics that the Bombay Dost workshop also engaged and struggled with.

Through the frictions, gaps, agreements and disagreements between Fanon's and Julien's work, and through an examination of Julien's work as a visual text that provokes thought I argue that we can get at a visualized anti-colonial queer politics, or more specifically we find that Julien's *Looking* in relation to Fanon's oeuvre points toward a visual poetics/politics of resistant desire(s). The stylized, rich, beautiful and provocative images in *Looking* form a sort of visual poetics and politics of resistant desire(s). What I

mean here by "resistant desire(s)" follows from Grosz and Deleuze and Guattari's work cited above, that is, that the flows of desire or movements of desire are not separate from the social. Desire is socially channeled by unequal relations of power precisely because desire can question and change these very relations of power. Desire builds alliances and it can bring people together. Extending Grosz's work I am referring specifically to queer desire(s), the central focus of *Looking*. Throughout each chapter the contours of this visual poetics of resistant desire(s) are discussed and outlined in greater detail.

To address and work with the notion of the scene/seen or the visual element within Fanon's and Julien's work, each chapter begins with an excerpt from their texts. Each chapter then works with parallel scenes from both authors, and draws on a particular problematic that traverses both of their works. Chapter one draws on the question of bodies, masculinities and sexuality that both Fanon and Julien engage with in relation to the construction of anti-colonial subjectivities. In this chapter I draw on critiques of Fanon's and Julien's work to argue that Julien's representation of black male bodies as beautiful challenges Fanon's assertion that anti-colonial masculinity must necessarily be violent and hyper-masculine, pointing out that queer black male bodies and desires are just as disruptive to colonial relations of power. Chapter two considers Fanon's and Julien's interest in the struggle over the writing of history. The chapter begins with a discussion of how the writing of queer histories such as Langston Hughes's biography is challenged by Julien. Drawing on critiques of Julien's work and on various texts that theorize diaspora, this chapter explores the connection between writing histories, diasporic desire and the question of nations. The third and final chapter examines the place of death and desire in Fanon's and Julien's work and draws on the AIDS crisis that

Julien's work evokes to discuss how queer mourning during the AIDS crisis disrupts heteronormative, privatized acts of mourning, transforming death and mourning into a collective concern and practice. Each chapter then focuses on a specific aspect of Julien's visual poetics/politics of resistant queer desires from the inscription of desire on bodies in chapter one, to black queer diasporic desires in chapter two and ending with collective mourning practices in chapter three. Julien's visual poetics/politics of resistant desires interrogate, re-work and move beyond Fanon's anti-colonial politics, transforming the scene of colonization to a scene of decolonization.

"Look, a Negro!" It was an external stimulus that flicked over me as I passed by. I made a tight smile.

"Look, a Negro!" It was true. It amused me.

"Look, a Negro!" The circle was drawing a bit tighter. I made no secret of my amusement.

"Mama, see the Negro! I'm frightened!" Frightened! Frightened! Now they were beginning to be afraid of me. I made up my mind to laugh myself to tears, but laughter had become impossible.

[…]

Where shall I hide?

"Look at the nigger!... Mama, a Negro! … Hell, he's getting mad…. Take no notice, sir, he does not know that you are as civilized as we …."

My body was given back to me sprawled out, distorted, recolored, clad in mourning in that white winter day. The Negro is an animal, the Negro is bad, the Negro is mean, the Negro is ugly; […] the handsome little boy is trembling because he thinks that the nigger is quivering with rage, the little white boy throws himself into his mother's arms: Mama, the nigger's going to eat me up.

All round me the white man, above the sky tears at its navel, the earth rasps under my feet, and there is a white song, a white song. All this whiteness that burns me….

-- Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (111-114)

At the Wake, (a bar and club), young, fashionable black men and white men dressed in finely tailored suits dance and drink together to the following blues tune:

"Called me a freakish man. What more was there to do? She called me a freakish man. What more was there to do? …"

Alex is sitting alone at the bar staring out onto the dance floor with a painfully troubled lonely look in his eyes when he notices Beauty. He looks at Beauty. Beauty is drinking with his white lover Kurt at a dining table not far from Alex, and Beauty notices Alex. Beauty looks at Alex. Beauty's face is framed by dark shadows and softened by the club lights. But the exchange of looks between Alex and Beauty is abruptly interrupted by Kurt who jealously slams a champagne bottle on the dining table. Beauty turns his attention to Kurt once again. Alex, annoyed, turns his back away from them and orders another drink from the bar. Alex looks and stares straight ahead into the camera.

Looking relations and the exchange of looks punctuate the scenes cited above from both Fanon's and Julien's work. In both scenes, the bodies of black men receive heightened attention and are marked in either detested terms as the racialized other or, in Julien's scene as the site/sight of scopic pleasure and desire. Informed by these excerpts, this chapter first begins with a discussion of 'race' and the visible/visual. It then considers Fanon's discussion of vision and the corporeally embedded notion of race as expressed in the scene excerpted above. Julien's work will be discussed in the second half of this chapter in relation to Fanon's gender and sexual politics. In this chapter I argue that we can theorize race, gender and sexuality through Julien's scene of looking relations (summarized above) to question Fanon's politics of decolonization. Julien's visual poetics and politics provide a new representation of black masculinity that challenges colonial constructions of gender and sexuality.

Constructing the visuality of race

The construction of race as a marker of difference inscribed on bodies is an historical development, tied intimately with colonial regimes of knowledge production and power relations that privilege and rely on sight, vision and the visible. Modernity, notes Martin Jay in his essay "Scopic Regimes of Modernity", is widely known as "ocularcentric": from telescopes to microscopes and from mirror metaphors in philosophy to critiques of the "society of the spectacle", Jay writes that the modern era repeatedly evokes and privileges the visual (3). Extending an analysis of the ocularcentricity of modernity to critiques of racial discourse, Wiegman offers a revealing history of the development of what she calls the "visible economy of race" (20). Although Wiegman's study is concerned with American racial politics her work readily speaks to the formation of racial

discourses in the "west" more broadly. Wiegman contends that the visible has been a site of making "race" real in the United States and this visible economy of race assumes that the body is the primary site of "'being'" inscribed with a "natural meaning of flesh" (ibid.). Drawing on Fanon, Wiegman writes that perhaps the west's preoccupation with race lies with *how* and *what* ought to be seen (22).

Wiegman's chapter "Visual Modernity" is concerned with the shift that took place during the 18th century in European science's conception of race. At this time natural history's account of race as fluid and observable was displaced by the rise of the human sciences which, through the discourse of biology, characterized the human species as stable and unchanging, making race "more than skin deep" (23). Wiegman cites the work of George Cuvier in the human sciences as an example of this shift in discourse and racializing epistemologies. Cuvier compared the brain and skulls of different organisms, an endeavor which came to influence ideas of evolution and hierarchy and ultimately rendered race as "lodged fully in the body" to include interior, corporeal spaces (31). Tracing further shifts in the visible economy of race, Wiegman writes that by the 19th century visual observation and investigation were no longer sufficient in the pursuit for knowledge, and as a result, new instruments of measurement were devised (32). Along with this development, Wiegman importantly points out that analogy became "a definitive mechanism for positing relations between things that were, from the level of appearance, seemingly unconnected." (ibid.) This is a disturbing new development since the use of "analogic relations" expanded race "to constitute new identities of bodies as sexual, gendered, and criminal excesses" and with phrenology, in particular, comparisons were drawn between the skulls of "'women and lower races…'" (ibid.). Vision and

eyesight then were no longer considered "a neutral moment of reception but an arbitrary and disciplinary operation, one in which experience is actually produced in the subject", notes Wiegman who draws heavily from Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (37). Concluding her discussion on the historical development of the visible economy of race, Wiegman writes that panopticism then became the primary mode of visualizing race since panoptic surveillance technologies are able to transcend the visual limits of the eye, constructing new meanings of race as corporeally embedded (41). This observation resonates with and is complicated by Bhabha's point that "seeing/being seen" involves both the "disciplinary" and the "pleasurable", the creation of fantasy and questions of "subjectification" and relations of power (76). Wiegman's discussion of the visible economy of race traces the historical formation of racializing discourses in the west in relation to the privileged position of vision and visuality in western discourses of science.

The panoptic looking relations in the visible economy of race underscores Mercer's point that looking is always concerned with relations of power ("Avid" 16). However, adding to Wiegman's discussion of vision and visuality, several writers have emphasized the multiplicity and instability of looking relations in the visible economy of race and difference. Speaking more broadly to Christian Metz's concept of "'scopic regime'", Martin Jay emphasizes that there are several, competing "scopic regimes": "the scopic regime of modernity may best be understood as a contested terrain, rather than a harmoniously integrated complex of visual theories and practices" (4). Jay suggests that there are a number of visual subcultures that compete with what has widely been called *the* singular scopic regime of modernity: Cartesian perspectivalism (ibid.). Cartesian perspectivalism's assumption that the "optical order" is objective, that the eye is capable

of grasping the entire world, and that vision is fixed, static and embodied by an "ahistorical, disinterested, disembodied subject entirely outside of the world it claims to know only from afar" (6-7,10) resonates with some of the features of the visible economy of race discussed by Wiegman. However, similar to Jay's contention that scopic regimes are plural, Munoz also advocates moving away from Christian Metz and Laura Mulvey's filmic theories of the gaze toward conceptualizing spectatorship and looking as vacillating and not fixed (26-27). In a similar vein, Rogoff suggests that subjects and objects themselves are not stable and coherent. There is slippage between the two since boundaries are unstable, and "vision becomes a ground for contestation in which unstable normativity constantly and vehemently attempts to shore itself up" (34). Rogoff, for instance, cites the film *The Crying Game* which demonstrates that vision is not stable and that things cannot be discerned and known completely through sight. The visible economy of race that Wiegman outlines, though characterized by disciplinary practices marked by relations of power, can be understood to exist in relation to other competing scopic regimes. Furthermore, despite attempts to fix looking relations and the visual, subjects and vision are unstable and changing.

Fanon's encounter with the look from the other – in this case the white child on the streets of metropolitan France in *Black Skin, White Masks* cited at the beginning of this chapter – can be understood in terms of a visible economy of race that Wiegman describes. Although Fanon's work speaks readily to Sartre's existentialist thought, Fanon's thought after meeting the child's look— "I found that I was an *object* in the midst of other *objects*"—can also be understood in terms of a visible economy of race where science creates isolated objects of study to be examined by an "objective eye"

(italics mine, 109). Fanon assumed that all men are equal until he met the white man's eyes. It was then that he felt the oppressive weight of the look and it burdened him (110). Hall, who seems to affirm Wiegman's assertion that the visible economy of race is lodged in the body, brings attention to Fanon's point that the "epidermalisation" of race implies the "inscription of race on the skin" ("After-life" 16): "the corporeal schema crumbled [under the legends, stories and history about black peoples], its place taken by a racial epidermal schema" (Fanon, *Black Skin* 112). Fanon powerfully draws attention to the everyday violences of the exchange of looks under colonialism (Fusco 55) when he writes that he feels as though he were being dissected under white eyes, "the only real eyes" (116). Noting the scientific language and impulse to create new categorizes of objects and to place them in a hierarchical schema, Fanon writes that in the eyes of white people Fanon is a "new kind of man, a new genus. Why, it's a Negro!" (ibid.). The glance of the other fixes Fanon like "a chemical solution is fixed by a dye", and race becomes a fixed, pre-given set of meanings and knowledges about black people, specifically black men (Fanon, *Black Skin,*109, 116). Fanon's conceptualization of race as a visual fixing of a racial epidermal schema on his body is part of this visible economy of race under colonialism, but the inscription of race on the body is not "genetic or physiological", Hall reminds us: It is "cultural and discursive" ("After-life" 16) or as Fanon writes it is "overdetermined from without" (116).

The overdetermination of race from without points to Fanon's crucial assertion that "the black soul is a white man's artifact" (*Black Skin* 14), rupturing, then, the stability and fixity of looking within the visible economy of race. Fanon repeatedly emphasizes that blackness is a colonial construction in relation to whiteness: "The Negro

is unaware of [the myths of blackness] as long as his existence is limited to his own environment; but the first encounter with a white man oppresses him with the whole weight of his blackness" (ibid.150). Fanon lists the metaphors and adjectives that are associated with blackness -- "darkness, shadow, shades, night, the labyrinths of the earth, abysmal depths" – while also pointing out the features of whiteness - "the bright look of innocence, the white dove of peace, magical heavenly light" (ibid. 189) – bringing attention to the binary logic of blackness and whiteness. Fanon furthermore adds that it is necessary for the white colonial world to construct a notion of blackness: "[T]he negro is needed" not only within the unconscious economy of race, writes Fanon (ibid.176), but also as a scapegoat of white civilization which is based on ideas of progress (ibid 194). Fanon astutely describes the constructedness of race in the colonial world and offers a critical reading of race as a binary construction which is always positioned in relation to whiteness. This analysis of race underscores Bhabha's reading of *Black Skin, White Masks* as a text that is disruptive of the colonial order of race. Bhabha brings attention to Fanon's intriguing statement toward the end of *Black Skin, White Masks*: "The Negro is not. Any more than the white man" (231). For Bhabha, the period or the pause is subversive and it ruptures constructions of race: The binary configuration of colonial subjects "is disturbed with one brief pause and the traditional grounds of racial identity are dispersed" (40). This rupture echoes Rogoff's point, cited above, that the boundaries of subjects are unstable, paralleling the instability and non-fixity of the act of looking in the visible economy of race.

Fanon's insurgent analysis of race as a visual formation under colonialism is also coupled with a critique of the gendering processes that converge specifically on the

bodies of black men. After encountering the look from the white child on the street, Fanon laments that he simply longs to be "a man among other men" rather than an object that is dislocated and imprisoned by the white man (*Black Skin* 112). Fanon brings attention to a hierarchy of masculinities when he states that a "man is expected to behave like a man. I was expected to behave like a black man—or at least like a nigger" who remains where he "belongs" as lesser than white men (ibid 114-115). The black man is constructed on solely biological and physical terms, writes Fanon (ibid. 163). That is, the black man is a biological danger, and when Fanon notes that the black man symbolizes the biological he means that the black man is specifically associated with his genitals: "one is no longer aware of the Negro but only of a penis; the Negro is eclipsed. He is turned into a penis. He *is* a penis" (170). Fanon also comments on the white fascination and preoccupation with the sexual life of black men and their supposed sexual potency (ibid.). In his concluding remarks on the novel *Un homme pareil aux autres* by Rene Maran – in which the character Jean Veneuse, born in the Antilles but living in Bordeaux, struggles to live in a white colonial world – Fanon suggests that the world ought to be transformed to restore the dignity of subjects like Veneuse: "We shall see that another solution is possible [to the colonial-race problem encountered by black men like Veneuse]. It implies a restructuring of the world" (ibid. 82).

In order to grasp Fanon's solution or proposal to restructure the world, it is crucial to outline what Fanon considers to be the broader features of colonial rule that administers a particular visible economy of race and gender on the bodies of black men. In *The Wretched of the Earth* Fanon describes colonialism as pure violence. "[C]olonialism," writes Fanon, "is not a thinking machine, nor a body endowed with

reasoning faculties. It is violence in its natural state" (61). Sartre, in his preface to *Wretched of the Earth*, points out that the European is able to become a man by creating slaves and monsters (26). In other words, the European male becomes a man at the expense of colonized men and this is an act of violence. To be a man, admits Sartre, requires being an accomplice of colonialism and colonial exploitation (25). The sheer violence that is required to support and sustain colonial domination suggests that the colonial world must be "confronted with greater violence" in order for it to yield to the colonized (Fanon, *Wretched* 61). Fanon claims that the world of colonial domination is violent and responsible for the dehumanization of colonized men, and it is this world that must be transformed. Decolonization according to Fanon, then, is only possible through unrelenting violence that parallels colonial violence.

The brutal violence of colonialism, according to Fanon, requires an equally unrelenting violence against colonial domination and through this violence colonized men form, assert and affirm a violent anti-colonial masculinity which they were denied access to under colonialism. "[D]ecolonization," asserts Fanon, "is always a violent phenomenon" (*Wretched* 35) and it is this violence in the colonies which humanizes enslaved men, writes Sartre (Ibid., 15). Decolonization and violence, it seems, become a matter of restoring the masculinity that was once denied to colonized men, a point that Mercer and Julien raise ("Race" 120). Sartre writes that "by this mad fury, by this bitterness and spleen, by their ever-present desire to kill us [Europeans], by the permanent tensing of powerful muscles which are afraid to relax, they [colonized men] have become men…" (17). This violence is a cleansing force, asserts Fanon, and it erases inferiority complexes, liberating and freeing colonized men (*Wretched* 94, 86). Fanon

later proclaims that he no longer shrinks and shrivels up when he is under the colonizer's look, which denotes a resistance to the dehumanizing look from the other, and this may furthermore point to Fanon's assertion that decolonization is ultimately "the veritable creation of new men" who no longer believe that they are lesser than the colonizer (45, 36). Violence and the creation and affirmation of the manhood of colonized men become part of the decolonizing struggle according to Fanon. This conceptualization of decolonization however points to several troubling and questionable aspects of Fanon's politics of decolonization in relation to questions of gender and race.

A particularly puzzling and troubling aspect of Fanon's anti-colonial politics based on a violent masculinity is Fanon's assertion that decolonization fundamentally involves a substitution: "decolonization is quite simply the replacing of a certain 'species' of men by another 'species' of men… there is a total, complete, and absolute substitution" (*Wretched* 35). Fanon continues that decolonization is a form of *tabula rasa*, a complete change of the colonial social structure from the bottom up, these changes that are willed and demanded by the colonized (ibid). Fanon's suggestion, however, that decolonization is a complete substitution – that "'[t]he last shall be first and the first last'" (*Wretched* 37) -- seems to contradict his prior point that decolonization changes the colonial system completely, a tabula rasa. One might ask, then, whether a tabula rasa transformation or a Fanonian substitution radically changes an entire colonial system. Substitution in Fanon's sense appears to imply that decolonization is a question of rearranging the placement of specific men in the social system. The "new men", who use violence in the struggle, simply replace the colonizers. Colonized men, according to Fanon, have dreams of "muscular prowess", of aggressive action and these tense muscles

are always ready to take the settler's place as persecutor (ibid 52-53). In a colonial world that is spatially divided into privileged quarters for the settlers and marginalized spaces for the colonized, Fanon describes further the colonized's dream of replacement:

> The look that the native turns on the settler's town is a look of lust, a look of envy; it expresses his dreams of possession—all manner of possession: to sit at the settler's table, to sleep in the settler's bed, with his wife if possible. The colonized man is an envious man. And this the settler knows very well; when their glances meet he ascertains bitterly, always on the defensive, 'They want to take our place.' It is true, for there is no native who does not dream at least once a day of setting himself up in the settler's place (39).

An uncertain and troubling aspect of Fanon's notion of decolonization as substitution which involves men of violent, aggressive constitution, is whether a replacement strategy necessarily implies a complete transformation of the colonial regime, a regime that constructs, reproduces and operates in and through the racialization and gendering of bodies through unequal looking relations. Furthermore, Fanon's politics of decolonization, discussed thusfar, is ostensibly male-centred or concerned mainly with the liberation of male bodies and masculinity (we will also see later that heterosexuality is also assumed by Fanon). Does Fanon's notion of decolonization as substitution also consider and change women's lived experiences and political position under colonialism?

To answer this question, Lola Young considers Fanon's analysis of colonialism and his gender politics, and examines his representation of women in *Black Skin, White Masks*, pointing out that Fanon's work is androcentric. Young argues that Fanon's work is suffused with "a deep seam of fear and rage regarding black women" (88). In his chapter entitled "The Woman of Color and the White Man", Fanon examines the characters Mayotte Capecia in *Je suis Martiniquaise* and Nini in a novel bearing her name. Young writes that Fanon launches harsh criticisms against women of colour in their struggle to survive and live under colonialism in Martinique. For example, Fanon

dismissively claims that Capecia decided to become a laundress so she can whiten the world after she failed to blacken it by pouring black ink over a white child (Young 91). Young speaks against Fanon's dismissive interpretation of Capecia's occupation by pointing out that there were limited employment options for black women and for this reason Capecia may have only had the option of working as a laundress (ibid.). Fanon also reduces and places women of colour into two groups: "the Negress and the mulatto. The first has only one possibility and one concern: to turn white. The second wants not only to turn white but also to avoid slipping back" (*Black Skin* 54). Young importantly notes that Fanon does not consider the potential for mulattos to challenge the binary constructions of black and white, other and self (92). She also perceptively claims that Fanon makes women of colour responsible for the "'denegrification' of the 'race'" because black women bear children (93). Black women are a threat to black men through their relations with white men and through their "unknowable" status as expressed in Fanon's oft cited line that he knows nothing about the woman of colour (Fanon, *Black* Skin 179-180 in Young 94).

Furthermore, in trying to work against the colonial fantasy of the black man raping white women (Fuss 31), Fanon writes with much disdain that white women wish to be raped and brutalized (*Black Skin* 178-179). Fuss importantly notes here that Fanon is concerned with launching a counter-narrative to the construction of black men as rapist, however, by doing this Fanon ignores the violence of imperial masculinity and the rape of black women by white men under colonialism (Fuss 31). Fanon's scathing remarks, analysis and criticisms of women, in particular women of colour as Young points out, is in marked contrast with Fanon's sympathetic depiction of the fictional

character Jean Veneuse in the novel *Un homme pareil aux autres*. Young writes that Veneuse, a black man in France, is described by Fanon as introspective and intellectual compared to his description of the woman of colour as narcissistic and idiotic (94). Under colonialism, colonized men are denied access to a dignified masculinity and if decolonization involves reclaiming and asserting a liberated, violent masculinity, how do colonized women then participate in the struggle for decolonization? Fanon's response to this question is also unfortunately limited.

Fanon's only mention of women in the anti-colonial struggle is limited to a few chapters in *A Dying Colonialism*, written years after *Black Skin, White Masks* during the Algerian war of independence. Here Fanon is cognizant of the ways in which women of colour, particularly Algerian women, are gendered and racialized under colonialism and his analysis is more nuanced and supportive of women in anti-colonial struggle. Fanon acknowledges that women are directly targeted as women under colonialism, and here he cites the "battle of the veil" which took place in Algeria during the early 1930s before the war of independence (37). Fanon notes that the French were aware that if they could "win over" Algerian women by unveiling them, the colonial project of domination could proceed successfully, that is, if the French wanted to destroy Algerian society they would first have to conquer native women (ibid.). Fanon describes the shifting uses and meanings of veiling and unveiling in the anti-colonial struggle, pointing out that Algerian women, when unveiled, could penetrate the settler's spaces in Algeria and plant bombs, or under the veil they could conceal weapons and other tools in the struggle. However later on Fanon writes that women in the struggle are simply recognizing what it means to take on "responsibility", and because of women's increasing role in the struggle Fanon

asserts that women's liberation becomes part of the revolutionary struggle (107). Fanon does not recognize or even appear to care that perhaps the anti-colonial struggle is impossible without considering women and confronting colonial constructions of femininity, or that even women of colour are central to the anti-colonial struggle.

Instead, Fanon asserts that the heterosexual couple is the "nucleus of the nation" in the anti-colonial struggle (114). The heterosexual family receives a special chapter in *A Dying Colonialism* where Fanon examines the changes occurring to this particular family arrangement in the decolonizing struggle. In his discussion of the heterosexual couple, Fanon writes that "[*t*]*he mingling of fighting experience with conjugal life deepens the relations between husband and wife and cements their union*… This couple is no longer an accident but something rediscovered, willed, built" (114, Fanon's emphasis). The heterosexual couple, then, is formed under and strengthened by the war of independence. Fanon recognizes how women take part and have a stake in the anti-colonial struggle however the complexities of race and gender as they converge on the bodies of women are not central to Fanon's analysis of decolonization. Instead, the heterosexual couple, in addition to the violence of the colonized man, become the "nucleus", a central part of the war of independence. What are the effects or possible problems with this model of decolonization? Do "queer" identifications and critiques of heterosexism have a place in Fanon's politics of decolonization and the anti-colonial struggle? If the heterosexual couple and a particular masculine subjectivity become central to decolonization movements, this may not only suggest that "women" and "queer" are marginal to the struggle, but it may also follow that these signs become a problem, even antithetical to the anti-colonial struggle in its most conservative configuration.

Critiques of black nationalism and American black liberation struggles in the 1960s may contribute to an analysis of the limitations and problems with Fanon's sexual and gender politics.[1] Bell hooks's work may point out how Fanon's assertion that a violent, aggressive masculinity is central to the anti-colonial struggle is problematic, and why anti-colonial politics must question hegemonic masculinity. Hooks makes clear that rape was a central metaphor of colonial domination in relation to gender and sexuality (57). Her assertion that rape symbolized the castration of colonized men (ibid) is discussed by Fanon in the chapter entitled "Colonial War and Mental Disorder" in *Wretched of the Earth*, Case No. 1 of Series A, "*Impotence in an Algerian following the rape of his wife*" (254). In this chapter, Fanon's sole concern with the mental health of the husband instead of the woman who was raped only confirms hooks's point that little attention is paid to the sexual exploitation of black women by white men in studies of colonialism (57). The preoccupation with the castration and impotence of black men under racist colonial domination as cited above speaks to Mercer and Julien's discussion of Robert Staple's book *Black Masculinity*; as they point out, because black men have been deprived of their manhood under racism-colonialism, they have resorted to sexual domination as a strategy to maintain and confirm their masculinity – they simply cannot display any sign of weakness or vulnerability ("Race" 120). Adding to this point, hooks writes that black liberation struggles have rarely confronted colonial, white supremacist gendered metaphors of rape and domination, and instead opt for associating manhood and sexual dominance with freedom (58). The problems with this affirmation of a hegemonic

[1] By considering these critiques in relation to Fanon, I do not mean to suggest a facile equation of his work with black nationalism and black liberation struggles, but I instead want to suggest that these critiques are useful for thinking through Fanon's ideas of decolonization, and for pointing out the possible effects and reverberations of his thought in other social movements that relate to questions of decolonization.

manhood or masculinity in more conservative strains of anti-colonial thought can be detected in Eldridge Cleaver's book *Soul On Ice*, notes hooks, where Cleaver writes that black manhood is reclaimable by raping black and white women (ibid.). Mercer and Julien, again appealing to Staple's work, point out that Cleaver problematically justified rape as a revolutionary act against white America on the grounds that black men must reclaim black women as property from white men (116). This point about reclaiming, even becoming the white men in relations of sexual domination, harken back to Fanon's notion of decolonization as substitution where colonized men use violence to fulfill their dreams of replacing the settler, assuming his place and having access to his "property". In response to this violent, anti-feminist politics of black liberation, hooks writes that

> [a]s long as black people hold on to the idea that the trauma of racist domination is really the loss of black manhood, then we invest in the racist narratives that perpetuate the idea that all black men are rapists, eager to use sexual terrorism to express their rage about racial domination (59).

Hooks suggests that several important changes ought to be made: masculinity must be re-conceptualized, black liberation struggles should not be equated with hegemonic masculinity, and lastly black liberation must emerge from a feminist standpoint to address racism and the struggles of all black people (64). Missing from hooks's astute analysis, however, are questions of heterosexism and heteronormativity in black liberation politics, which Marlon Ross importantly points out in another context.

Ross brings attention to Eldridge Cleaver's homophobia and more specifically his homophobic polemic against James Baldwin. In a footnote, Ross suggests that the attacks against Baldwin and queer folks took place in the late 1960s and early 1970s when the gay and lesbian movement was beginning to become active (48). At this time, Ross claims that homosexuality was constructed as a scapegoat within black nationalist

discourse (ibid.). Homosexuality in black nationalist discourse was equated with contamination and was constructed as a threat to the reproduction of the race (Ross 28). As well, homosexuality was considered to be "individual decadence" by black nationalists, and this decadence was imagined to bring eventual doom to white America (Ross 30). Articulations of queer desire, then, were constituted as individualism and not about taking part in racial solidarity (ibid.). Ross offers a critical cautionary note to his analysis, however, pointing out the dangers of associating homophobia with black nationalism. He writes that black sexuality is usually framed in binary terms of "hyper homosexuality" or homophobic black masculinity (48, footnote 16). Ross cites Huey P. Newton's collection of speeches *To Die for the People: The Writings of Huey P. Newton* as an example of a queer positive politics within black liberation struggles (ibid.). Dollimore similarly cites Newton's statements and claims that the Black Panthers were the first radical group to acknowledge the queer movement (*Sexual* 333). Ross asks why Cleaver's work receives more attention than Newton's words (48, footnote 16). Ross's concern with the greater attention paid to Cleaver's work is important to consider here. Returning to Fanon's masculinist anti-colonial politics and perhaps even black nationalism, Mercer brings attention again to the persistence of the anti-feminist and homophobic thrust of Fanon's work. If the assertion of an "active, phallic, masculinity depends on the repudiation and casting out of passive, thereby 'feminine,' erotic aims", then, Mercer writes, the demonization of homosexuality in black nationalist discourse requires "the expulsion of the feminine within the man, for him to be a 'real' black man" ("Busy" 43). An assertion of hegemonic black masculinity in black nationalist discourse may construct a homophobic and heterosexist politics of black liberation.

Similar to Lola Young's critique of Fanon's gender politics, many critics have brought attention to and examined the homophobia and heterosexism of Fanon's work. There are several key remarks made in *Black Skin, White Masks* which point to Fanon's deeply troubling analysis of sexuality. Firstly, Dollimore brings attention to Fanon's statement that the negrophobic man is a repressed homosexual (Fanon, *Black Skin* 156 in *Sexual* 345). Here Dollimore writes that Fanon associates negrophobia with violent racism and even suggests that racism causes homosexuality when Fanon writes about white men patronizing houses to be whipped by black men (Fanon, *Black Skin* 177 in ibid.). Dollimore then points out Fanon's denial of homosexuality in the Antilles and his simultaneous acknowledgement of the presence of men who dress like women (ibid.). Fanon, however, asserts that the men who dress like women lead "'normal sex lives'" and here Dollimore writes that Fanon attempts to "reassure the reader" of the masculinity of men who dress like women (ibid.): these men "'can take a punch like any he-man'" claims Fanon (*Black Skin* 180 in Fuss 32). Fanon also writes that black men may be gay because white men exploit their sexuality in Europe, and furthermore Fanon exclaims that he finds it revolting when a man comments that another man is sensual (Fanon, *Black Skin* 201 in Dollimore, *Sexual* 346). Mercer's analysis of homophobia in Fanon's text also brings attention to Fanon's oft cited footnote on the absence of homosexuality in the Antilles (*Black Skin* 180)[2]. Mercer points out that Fanon's footnote presents a "series of denials, negations and repudiations" where Fanon finds himself describing then

[2] It may be useful to cite Fanon's footnote here which has received much critical attention:

> Let me observe at once that I had no opportunity to establish the overt presence of homosexuality in Martinique. This must be viewed as the result of the absence of the Oedipus complex in the Antilles. […] We should not overlook, however, the existence of what are called there 'men dressed like women' or 'godmothers.' […] But I am convinced that they lead normal sex lives […] and they are not impervious to the allures of women-fish and vegetable merchants. In Europe, on the other hand, I have known several Martinicans who became homosexuals, always passive. But this was by no means a neurotic homosexuality: For them it was a means to a livelihood, as pimping is for others. (*Black Skin* 180)

dismissing the presence of homosexuality ("Busy" 44). Fuss furthermore adds that Fanon's "'hate complexes'" are described as though they constitute "same-sex desire" (32). Drawing on Edelman, Fuss brings attention to Fanon's equation of "white racism=castration" and his assumption that "homosexuality=castration", asserting then that it is "'proper to conclude that white racism=homosexuality'" and "homosexuality=white racism" (ibid.). For Fuss, these equations offer little to people who are committed to an anti-imperialist and an anti-homophobic politics (ibid.). The form of masculinity that Fanon values and supports in his work is a heteronormative masculintity which, as Mercer suggested earlier, requires an expulsion of the feminine and a denial of homosexuality. Fanon rejects colonial dehumanization and "the terror of the very real threat of castration", then, through homophobia (Mercer, "Busy" 45). Doy echoes this point by noting that homosexuality becomes constituted as an enemy of conservative forms of black masculinity (163). Fuss's concern with the limitations of Fanon's work for anti-colonial, queer positive activists is worth considering, however Fuss herself suggests how Fanon's work may be useful for such radical politics.

Fuss provides a critical reappraisal of Fanon's troubling footnote, suggesting that Fanon may be questioning the Eurocentricism of psychoanalysis and the rigid categories of sexuality. Fanon's claim that the Oedipus complex is not present in the Antilles can also be read as an effort to question the universality of the Oedipus complex (Fuss 33). Fuss contends that Fanon demonstrates the limits of Oedipus "or rather the ideological role Oedipus plays as a limit in the enculturating sweep of colonial expansionism" (ibid.). By historicizing Fanon's claim that the Oedipus complex is absent in the Antilles, Fuss brings attention to colonialism's fetishistic and endless desire for "exotic black bodies –

both black women and black men" (ibid.). In other words, as Fuss points out, Fanon may in fact be suggesting the cultural specificities of the formation of homosexual identities and here, Fuss asks, whether it is "possible to discuss homosexuality as a global, universal formation given that these categories of sexuality are ethnocentric, that is, historically and geographically specific[.]" (ibid.). In *Black Skin, White Masks* and *Wretched of the Earth* Fanon does in fact acknowledge the Eurocentric limits of the work of various European theorists. Fanon remarks that Freud, Alder and Jung "did not think of the Negro in all their investigations" (*Black Skin* 151). Discussing Jung's notion of the collective unconscious as "inherited cerebral matter", Fanon contends that the collective unconscious is social and it is formed within particular historical and political contexts that are not detached from colonialism and racism: "the collective unconscious, without our having to fall back on the genes, is purely and simply the sum of prejudices, myths, collective attitudes of a given group" (*Black Skin* 188). In *Wretched of the Earth* Fanon also confronts the Eurocentric limits of Marx and discusses the links between class and race, asserting that in the colonial context "Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched" (40). Fuss demonstrates that Fanon may offer a radical critique of the Eurocentric, modernist constructions of universal categories of sexuality, and he may also be rejecting the colonial equation of "primitive=invert" (35). However Fuss is not suggesting that homophobia is absent from Fanon's text. If revulsion according to Fanon is the expression of a phobia (*Black Skin* 154) then, returning to Fanon's statement that he finds it *revolting* when a man desires another man, Fanon expresses his homophobia (Fuss 33). Fanon then does not challenge the misogyny and homophobia of colonial discourse, contends Fuss (36). If, according to Fanon, decolonization is a substitution and

the reclamation of a violent, uncompromising masculinity by colonized men then it is almost implicit that imperial, heterosexist masculinity goes untransformed in the decolonizing struggle. Decolonization cannot be a simple replacement of masculinities and men – it requires a radical questioning of colonial masculinities and its heteronormative prescriptions of sexuality. How then might masculinity, race, sexuality and anti-colonialism be thought of differently? How might the "feminine" be returned from its expulsion or exile from black masculinity and brought back into the anti-colonial struggle?

To confront these questions I follow Lola Young's lead. Young, critiquing the misogyny in Fanon's discussion of women of colour, suggests that we ought to reconsider Fanon's oft cited scene of colonial looking relations between Fanon and a white boy and this child's mother (cited at the beginning of this chapter), and instead imagine this scene in relation to black women (93).Young asks,

> [w]hat if the scene were of a white father and daughter, with the child gazing at a black woman? Would the little girl speak out in public in the same startling manner as the little boy? In this new scenario, might not the father have initiated the sequence of looks, being male, being white? Would the black woman quiver with fear and self-loathing? Might she not, in any case, be invisible? (ibid.)

If a black woman were confronted on the street by a white child and her father, a different set of questions on colonialism, race and gender would be asked and a different set of analyses would follow. Taking Young's suggestion seriously, I propose that we consider Isaac Julien's scene in *Looking for Langston*, summarized at the beginning of this chapter, as an alternate scene vis a vis Fanon's colonial scene. Julien's scene is a potentially productive site/sight from which to theorize gender, sexuality, race, colonialism and power. His scene visualizes how prevailing heteronormative forms of masculinities can be subverted by re-orienting looking relations through a queer lens. In

other words, I would repeat Thomas Harris's suggestion that black gay men have something to teach straight men (Gates, "Discussion" 86). This scene may also suggest how queer sexualities are part of and (in)form anti-colonial struggles.

Isaac Julien's *Looking for Langston* offers a new representation of black masculinities that challenges and subverts colonial constructions of masculinity as domineering and violent. In a discussion on the filmmaker's role as image-producer during the Mirage exhibit, Julien asserts that because artists are concerned with the question of visuality, they ought to revisit the body and rethink the act of looking ("Film-makers' Dialogue" 166). He submits that there is a need to consider a third way of looking at the black body and the body's relation to "visual practices" (ibid.). The dominant representations and images of black male bodies and sexuality in mainstream films, notes hooks, are primarily concerned with black male bodies as a threat or danger (197). *Looking,* on the other hand, counters these prevailing representations and allows viewers "to look at black maleness with visual pleasure, not with a sense of threat or danger [...] black men appear vulnerable" in the film and are devoid of "the protective shield of hardened masculinity" (ibid.). In a similar vein, Gates applauds the presentation of black male bodies as soft, vulnerable, even passive in *Looking* (79). Julien's earlier film *Passion of Remembrance*, writes Arroyo, also introduced new representations of black men, making them beautiful and sensual ("Films" 327). *Looking*, in particular, subverts dominant discourses of black masculinity especially through Essex Hemphill's poetry which talks back to white men, and furthermore *Looking* "recuperates the colonized image of black men", asserts Arroyo, by injecting new meaning into these images ("Films" 336). Here, Arroyo cites Hemphill's poems in the film as a disruptive

element within *Looking* which will be discussed below. I would emphasize Arroyo's point about the subversive use of Hemphill's poetry, and add that Julien's visualization of Bruce Nugent's queer, poetic work "Smoke, Lilies and Jade" contributes to this new representation of black men. When Gates brings attention to the representation of black male bodies as soft, he evokes the following lines from "Smokes, Lilies and Jade" which are recited in *Looking*: here, the narrator gently describes Beauty's body as "… soft… soft…soft" (Nugent in Wirth 85). Beauty's softness is furthermore accentuated through various lightning techniques employed in the film, visualizing Nugent's description of Beauty's face: "half his [Beauty's] face stained flush color by the sun… the other half in shadow… blue shadow… his eyelashes casting cobwebby blue shadows on his cheek… his lips were so beautiful…" (ibid. 83). Julien's representation of black masculinity as soft and beautiful is in marked contrast with the hardened, tough representation of black, anti-colonial masculinity in Fanon's work. Recall Fanon's assertion that an anti-colonial masculinity is based on violence, which Sartre describes in his preface to *Wretched*: "by this mad fury, by this bitterness and spleen, by their ever-present desire to kill us [Europeans], *by the permanent tensing of powerful muscles which are afraid to relax*, they have become men" (italics mine 17). Fanon's tense, violent anti-colonial masculinity does little to challenge the notion of the black man as "the symbol of Evil and Ugliness" (Fanon, *Black Skin* 180) in colonial discourse. Julien's representation of black masculinity, his counter-images of strong, soft, beautified black male bodies counters Fanon's and colonial discourse's model of heteronormative, violent and powerful hyper-masculinity.

Julien's filmic scene of the exchange of looks in the club also counters colonial looking relations, constituting black men as looking subjects who desire and are desired by one another. In other words, Julien proposes a scene in which black men look at one another making black male bodies "'the site of pleasure'" and challenging an uncritical, consuming look from white colonial subjects (Doy 163). In an interview with Fisher, Julien explains that he constructed the circulation of looks in the club scene around Audre Lorde's discussion of looking in her book *Zami*. Julien quotes Lorde: "'But we seldom looked into each other's black eyes lest we see our own aloneness, and our own blunted power, mirrored in pursuit of darkness. Some of you die inside the gaps between those mirrors and those turned away eyes.'" (Fisher 68). In *Looking* then we find that there is loneliness in Alex's eyes as he sits alone at the bar, his solitary state punctuated by Langston's Hughes's voice projected from a nearby gramophone. Hughes proclaims, "I feel the blues coming [...] sad oh weary blues". But Julien works against the "blunted power" that Lorde describes and locates a different form of power in the look. Mercer explains that within the scene, the exchange of looks between Beauty and Alex constitutes both Beauty and Alex as desiring subjects instead of objects ("Dark"108). There is, however, a sort of "contest" of looks with the presence of Kurt, Beauty's white partner, who jealously disrupts the exchange of looks between Beauty and Alex (Doy 175). This contest of looks points to Julien's concern with "who has the 'right to look'" and the "interracial and intraracial looking relations that complicate the subject-object dichotomy of seeing and being seen" (Mercer "Skin" 199). In other words, Beauty is desired and is looked at by both Kurt and Alex, but Beauty also looks and desires Alex and this adds complexity to Fanon's assertion that black men are sealed in a "crushing

objecthood" (*Black Skin* 109). Working against the racial hierarchies inhered in looking relations, Mercer explains that Julien gives his characters "the license to look and, therefore, the power to envision fantasies" ("Ávid" 16). In the bar, viewers first encounter Alex's eyes or his look, and through Alex's eyes viewers see Beauty. After the exchange of looks between Alex and Beauty, Alex looks directly into the camera and stares back at viewers implicating the viewer's role in looking and, more importantly, evoking Arroyo's point about looking back and talking back defiantly against colonial, racist looking relations ("Films" 329). At particular moments viewers look through Alex's eyes (Silverman 105), but this look shifts and viewers then look through the eyes of different actors within the film. Julien then plays around with looking relations and supports Rogoff's earlier point on the shifting features of looking, affirming black men as looking subjects in the film and locating power in their desire to look at each other and to desire one other (Diawara 99).

Julien furthermore politicizes looking relations by queering looking relations and by infusing desire in looking relations, locating political solidarities in looking as a beautifying practice. This is captured by the song "Beautiful Blackman" sung by the British artist Blackberri (Arroyo also makes this point: "The Films" 332). The song is played after a black man, whose complexion is darker than Beauty's, enters the club and sits beside Alex at the bar. Both he and Alex look at Beauty and Kurt, but Alex then turns to look at this new bar patron. The song then begins.

> Come on, look at me. Beautiful black man, I'm just like you. You know I face discrimination too. Got here about 10, when I walked in this place hardly nobody here would look me in the face. You're such a beautiful black man but somehow you've been made to feel that your beauty's not real. Don't walk with your head bent low. Don't you do that no more [...] put a smile on your face, be proud of your race. You're beautiful, beautiful...

Jha brilliantly notes that this declaration of black men as beautiful echoes the "black is beautiful" slogan of the black power movement in America (10). But of course, Julien adds a queer pitch to this black power slogan, or rather, he identifies the queerness within it. Marlon Riggs similarly queers black liberation and solidarity movements in his film *Tongues Untied* through the layered repetition of the statement "brother to brother" in the opening sequence of the film, and also by visually juxtaposing footage of 1950s U.S. black civil rights demonstrations with footage of a contemporary pride march with black gay men. He ends his film with the statement "Black men loving black men is the revolutionary act".[3] Julien, among artists like Riggs, points out "the queer" within black liberation politics and anti-colonial struggle, making looking relations among black men an act of loving, desiring and affirming black male beauty and racial solidarity. To extend Julien to Fanon, Otalvaro-Hormillosa briefly notes that critics have pointed out the ambivalences in Fanon's gender-sexual politics and this has prompted either a "homophobic or homoerotic" reading of Fanon's text (102). Following Julien's lead in queering black solidarities, the queer in Fanon can be read for example in his opening words for *Black Skin, White Masks*: "Toward a new humanism…./Understanding among men…./Our colored brothers…./Mankind, I believe in you…./Race prejudice…./To understand and to love…." (7). Julien rethinks and queers anti-colonial and anti-racist activist solidarities, encouraging black men to look at one another, and to admire, desire and affirm one another's beauty as part of decolonizing struggles.

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[3] Riggs's statement may prompt one to wonder what happens to black women and queer black women in this construct. I suggest two different thoughts on this. First, Riggs's statement can be read as an erasure of black women's lives and activisms. In this sense, Riggs privileges the lives of black men over black women. On the other hand, I also think Riggs's statement acknowledges and counters male domination, heterosexism, hatred and violence by making black men a central part of struggles against male domination. However, I am hesitant to call this "the" (only, singular) form of resistance because it undervalues, displaces or ignores the lives and struggles of black women.

The revolutionary thrust of the declaration "black is beautiful", however, is a complicated political statement as Julien later points out. Blackberri's "Beautiful Blackman" comes to an end when footage of black male statues carved and displayed during the Harlem Renaissance appear. The narrator, Stuart Hall, reminds us that "the negro was once in vogue" explaining that black artists were commissioned and confined to producing art that was considered "primitive", a strategy that aimed to keep "black artists in their place". Footage of white patrons of the arts during the Harlem Renaissance are shown, pointing to the power relations and colonial looking relations between the artist, patron and the finished work of art. However by the end of the 1920s, Hall notes that "the negro" was no longer in vogue and black artists went hungry.[4] We then hear sirens, and the mourning scene appears, which is then followed by Julien's oft cited scene of Kurt walking through images of Robert Mapplethorpe's nude photographs of black men followed by a scene of Kurt paying a young black man for his sexual services. By following up Blackberri's song with scenes of white men exploiting black men and appropriating black artists, black bodies, and perhaps "black beauty" Julien is offering a cautionary note to warn viewers that the affirmation of black beauty by black men does not escape or completely negate the racist, colonial context of exploitation and the colonial constructions and adoration of blackness.

This cautionary note brings us back to Fanon. Bailey connects Fanon to Julien's work by pointing out that questions of power are steeped in looking relations and this is visualized by Julien when he films Kurt looking through *The Black Book* by

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[4] Here, Hall is referring to the "end" of the Harlem Renaissance when white patrons no longer supported or purchased the work of black artists.

Mapplethorpe[5] (106). Essex Hemphill's poem "If His Name Were Mandingo" punctuates the sequence in which Kurt walks by Mapplethorpe's black nudes. Hemphill's poem underscores the fetishistic, racist colonial representations of black male bodies as purely physical, sexual and phallic, articulating the analysis Fanon provided earlier: "It would be coincidence if he had a name, /a face, a mind. /If he's not hard-on /then he's hard up /and either way /you watch him/[…] He's only visible /in the dark / to you". Julien however undermines Mapplethorpe's photographs by including Hemphill's poem and also by projecting Mapplethorpe's photographs on what appears to be white sheets. When Kurt walks past the images, he disfigures them. This projection technique underscores the constructedness and the ephemeral, changing, shifting features of the photographs. These photographs, and by extension colonial representations of black male bodies, are not fixed, returning us to Fanon's discussion of the colonial fixing of/fixation on race. Julien repeats this visual language of projection when he displays Mapplethorpe's photograph of the lower profile of a black male body; behind the photograph, as if radiating from the model's phallus, the light of a film projector shines out. The multiple references made here to psychoanalytic projection, filmic projection, and so on are visualized brilliantly by Julien. Julien reminds us that positive images and messages of black strength, beauty and solidarity can be readily appropriated, exploited and fetishized by white consumers and artists under colonial, racist relations of power. In an interview with Fisher, Julien concludes that Mapplethorpe's work, like the wider gay sub-culture, simply reflects

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[5] Mapplethorpe's photographs have received much critical attention. Mercer, in his essay "Skin Head Sex Thing", offers a complicated rereading of Mapplethorpe's work drawing out the layers of complexity and the multiple contexts that surround his work. Hemphill emphasizes the colonial racism in Mapplethorpe's photographs and also concurs with Mercer's complex reading in relation to black gay male desires (39).

larger social structures that produce conservative representations of black male bodies (69).

Julien's engagement with the photographic images of Robert Mapplethorpe is part of a larger discussion of confronting colonial racism and Eurocentricism within queer communities. Both Mercer and Julien bring attention to the queer movement's indebtedness to black liberation movements, pointing out the links between the notion of black pride and queer pride ("True" 58). They also write against the affirmation of white masculintity in the gay community by explaining its connection to fascism and racism (ibid 57). Jha also articulates this concern, drawing on Thomas Yingling who writes that contemporary gay male representations have appropriated masculinity for "'its own self-empowerment'" from heteronormative institutions (48). Dollimore furthermore contends that the colonial white desire for the racial and cultural other were expressed by gay writers such as Gide in his travels to Algeria and the Congo (*Sexual* 338). As well, citing Said's *Orientalism*, Dollimore notes that the orient presented a "'different type of sexuality, perhaps more libertine and less guilt-ridden'" for the European (ibid. 190). What Dollimore points out, which Mercer and Julien discuss below, are the colonial constructions of the sexuality of the colonial other that shape contemporary queer movements and relations. Similar to Fuss's rereading of Fanon as a critique against European conceptions of sexuality, Mercer and Julien assert that "homosexual" is a constructed category and they challenge ideas that families are necessarily oppressive when they point out that black families provide support in the face of white racism ("Race" 105). They write that liberation based on a gay identity assumes that this identity is pre-existing and the "essence" of one's self (ibid. 106). The move away from an

essentialist notion of "gay desire", suggest Mercer and Julien, undermines Euro-imperialism's essentialist notion of sexuality which sought to "civilize" the native (ibid.). Finally, both authors point out that the idea of liberating one's self by "coming out" stems from a western idea of sexuality as concealed, controlled, a hidden truth that is contrasted with a native sexuality which is characterized as open and uninhibited (ibid. 107). When one comes out, write Mercer and Julien, queer black folks enter "the scene" filled with stereotypes of black sexuality (ibid. 105-107). Julien's visual critique of Mapplethorpe's photographs is a wider critique of racism and colonialism in queer communities. Julien explains that he visualizes the everyday violences in colonial looking relations which are similar to the violence perpetuated in the Fanonian exchange of looks, summarized at the beginning of this chapter (Fusco 55). We see this through Kurt who cuts his eyes at other black men who dare to look at him. Kurt maintains that Beauty is available only for his eyes to enjoy. Julien directly confronts then the racism in queer communities.

The everyday violence of the Fanonian exchange of looks that Julien mentions above speaks to questions of policing and the surveillance of identities and practices which Julien depicts throughout *Looking*. Both Bhabha (76) and Wiegman (37) note that relations of power are inscribed in the look where discipline and policing are enacted through surveillance strategies. Discussing the silences around Langston Hughes's queer identity in relation to questions of surveillance and policing, Ross writes that the best way to police desire is to compel individuals to police themselves, which Ross claims Hughes committed around his sexuality (39). Hughes was secretive in his life because he did not want to diminish or taint his work as a spokesperson for the race (ibid.). Ross, however, aptly notes that Hughes's policing of his own desires does not necessarily mean "greater

racial harmony but instead a greater confusion about the role that 'deviant' desire plays in the institution and sustenance of racial oppression" (40). Ross beautifully links racial and sexual oppression and power relations here. The question of self-policing is also evoked in the song "Blues for Langston", which Blackberri sings back to Hughes (Arroyo, "Films" 331). In a televised appearance of Hughes included in *Looking*, Hughes asks "what should I sing?" and Blackberri replies "should I sing the blues for you?" The song plays on and it speaks to Hughes and the "life that you've hidden, one you thought was forbidden [...] we want to know you." Self-policing, it seems, was not confined to Hughes's life. Hall reports in the film that "homosexuality was a sin against the race, so it had to be kept a secret [during the Harlem Renaissance], even though it was a widely shared one." Coupled with Hall's narration, Julien films a series of newspaper headlines that report on homosexuality in the Harlem Renaissance and he skillfully films a photograph of a straight couple which is positioned beside a typewriter. Beside the typewriter lies a photograph of Countee Cullen, an "out" artist of the Renaissance and Cullen's work "On these I stand". Scrolled in the typewriter is a page with the heading "Fire" possibly denoting the publication "Fire" of the Renaissance, to which Bruce Nugent contributed (Wirth 75). Jha perceptively brings attention to the sirens that are heard throughout the film, and she suggests that they signify the act of policing (44). The sirens are heard immediately after the camera films the typewriter with the "Fire" publication title. To add to Jha's insight, the sirens may also signify fire trucks, a burning desire that Nugent speaks of in "Smoke, Lilies and Jade"; the sirens are also a reminder that the film is referring to New York City (a city with a sizable queer community, the site of the Stonewall riots and the site of Harlem, a neighbourhood which was a

destination for black peoples migrating from the south in the early 20th century) where sirens (cop cars and fire trucks) are part of the cacophony of sounds on New York streets. The visualization of policing is also depicted at the conclusion of the film when the thugs and police violently barge into the Wake club waving clubs, only to find the space evacuated, unoccupied, deserted.

I would like to end here on the question of policing and surveillance, going back to Wiegman's discussion of the visible economy of race, through Langston Hughes's own words on policing and sight since Hughes will be discussed in the next chapter. However, first to summarize this chapter, Fanon provides an insightful analysis of the visuality of race by drawing from a colonial scene in which he encounters the look from a white boy in metropolitan France. However, Fanon's gender and sexual politics are troubling in the context of decolonizing struggles where Fanon asserts that a violent hegemonic masculinity is a necessary part of liberation movements. I suggest that we ought to consider a scene from Julien's *Looking* instead to think through questions of gender, masculinities, and the possibilities of decolonization by considering queer lives and sexualities. Julien's visual politics and poetics of resistant desire that represent black male bodies as beautiful is one route for imagining a critical politics of decolonization.

To end with Hughes's poetry then, I turn to Charles Nero's work. Nero provides a critical analysis of Hughes's poem entitled "Café: 3am" included in his collection of poems *Montage of a Dream Deferred* (1951), pointing out that the poem demonstrates Hughes's knowledge of and interest in queer lives (192). Hughes wrote the poem during the "sex crime panic" from 1949 through to 1955 when queer folks were targeted and arrested by the police and the names and occupations of those who were arrested were

published in the press (193). Nero writes that Arnold Rampersad, who wrote a biography of Hughes, failed to discuss this poem in the two volume biography and this failure "distorts Hughes's vision of black people, their communities, the place of gay people within them, and state-enforced oppression" (ibid.). The poem largely speaks for itself, pointing out the discriminatory policing of queer communities. Adding complexity to the question of self-policing, Nero writes that since gays and lesbians were being persecuted at this time it is no wonder that many kept their identities and activities a secret (193). However, Nero praises Hughes, who was always in a precarious financial situation and depended heavily on black churches and community centres for support, for publishing "Café: 3am": It "was an act of heroic proportions as well as a testimony to his faith in African Americans" (ibid.). The poem also touches on the above discussion of gender and sexuality and the policing of identities particularly in the line where Hughes writes about the "police lady or lesbian". The interchangeability of "police lady" and lesbian may be pointing to the shifting positions between (self-)policing and being "out". Hughes also draws attention to looking relations and identities through the eyes of the police. Fragments of Fanon and Julien, then, echo in Hughes's words:

> Detectives from the vice squad/with weary sadistic eyes /spotting fairies./Degenerates, /some folks say./But God, Nature, /or somebody /made them that way./Police lady or Lesbian /over there?/Where? (105)

he was in a field… a field of blue smoke and black poppies and red calla lilies… he was searching … on his hands and knees … searching … among black poppies and red calla lilies … he was searching and pushed aside poppy stems … and saw two strong […] legs … dancer's legs … the contours pleased him… […] and Beauty smiled and looked at him and smiled … said … I'll wait […] and Alex became confused and continued his search … on his hands and knees … pushing aside poppy stems and lily stems … a poppy … a black poppy… a lily ... a red lily … (Nugent 82-83 in Julien, *Looking*)

The settler makes history and is conscious of making it. And because he constantly refers to the history of his mother country, he clearly indicates that he himself is the extension of that mother country. Thus the history which he writes is not the history of the country which he plunders but the history of his own nation in regard to all that she skims off, all that she violates and starves.

The immobility to which the native is condemned can only be called in [sic] question if the native decides to put an end to the history of colonization—the history of pillage—and to bring into existence the history of the nation—the history of decolonization. (Fanon, *Wretched* 51)

For Fanon and Julien, history, or more specifically colonial western history, is a site of contestation, a site of struggle, of decolonizing struggles. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon firstly asserts that as part of the colonizing mission, the history of colonial subjects prior to colonization is attacked, reconfigured and colonized: "Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it" (210). Struggling to reverse the devaluation and demonization of black peoples and cultures as written by western colonialists in their history books, Fanon, in his search for the colonized's history, announces that he made his "most remarkable discovery. Properly speaking, this discovery was a rediscovery" (*Black Skin* 130). Fanon recovered and discovered a history of black people working in gold and silver two thousand years earlier, discounting the histories written by whites which construct black peoples as "primitive" (ibid.). This discovery "put the white man back into his place" writes Fanon (ibid. 131). However, Fanon is wary of relying on this rediscovered past in the struggle for decolonization. He refuses to commit himself to "the revival of an unjustly unrecognized Negro civilization" since he disagrees with tying himself to the past "at the expense of my present and of my future" (ibid. 226). In other words, a "practical solidarity with a given past" is necessary insofar as it brings people together in the struggle to end colonialism (ibid. 227). Fanon articulates a solidarity that turns away from movements that essentialize identity and movements that are preoccupied with a precolonial past: "It was not the black world that laid down my course of conduct. My black skin is not the wrapping of specific values"

(ibid.). Fanon then calls for creating a new history, the history of decolonization, to challenge colonial history (*Wretched* 315).

The question of history or writing anti-colonial histories and histories of colonized peoples is the concern for this chapter as it is a concern for both Fanon and Julien. As Fanon expresses above, history is a site of decolonizing struggle. In response to this, I first explore how Julien produces a counter-history or an open and queered history of the Harlem Renaissance and Langston Hughes's life. Julien creates this counter-history through several filmic representational techniques, strategies and practices: First, he constructs *Looking* as a meditation on the Harlem Renaissance; second, he confronts and decolonizes the colonial archive by using a montage approach to filmmaking; third, Julien draws on a diasporic perspective to engage with questions of history and the construction of collective identities. The second half of this chapter, then, takes up the links between the construction of histories and nations as they relate to the building of political solidarities and movements, to which Fanon and Julien bring attention. This discussion is informed especially by Gilroy's *Black Atlantic* and other writings on diaspora. Using Walcott's insight that nations and diaspora are caught up with each other, I later draw out a reading of the contradictions, tensions, and interconnections between nations and diaspora in Fanon's and Julien's work.

Following chapter one's discussion of Julien's representation of black masculinity as beautiful rather than violent and angry, by way of Fanon, in this chapter I want to suggest that Julien's visual poetics/politics of desire(s) and of decolonization is intimately tied to the imaginary, of dreaming and imagining decolonization differently via queer lives and desires. *Looking* imagines a different history of black men that may speak to

David Marriott's introductory words on dreaming in his book *On Black Men*. Marriott, quoting Joseph Beam, writes that

> Daring to dream is [...] a double commitment to pursue the wished-for risk and revolutionary hope that by dreaming the unthinkable – namely, wanting, rather than hating, one another – we can contest the dream work of racist culture[.]

Dreaming, or what I will refer to in this chapter as imagining, is a political process of, as Marriott writes referring specifically to black men, dreaming ourselves differently in art and literature, to name a few sites of imagining. The excerpt from Julien's scene above, narrated with the work of Bruce Nugent, illustrates this political process of imagining black men differently – Julien represents black men loving rather than hating one another. This political process of imagining is also an act of imagining political solidarities across different social and geographical boundaries which I endeavor to explore in this chapter.

Re-imag(in)ing and re-writing colonial, heteronormative histories

Isaac Julien, like Fanon, is concerned with the colonial –but more specifically heterosexist –writing of history. His engagement with the historical figure Langston Hughes points to Hughes's possible position as a site of historical "rediscovery", to use Fanon's term loosely. However, rather than rediscovering a hidden history and mobilizing collectivities through this history as Fanon proposes, Julien provides a sustained, critical engagement with the writing and representation of "History" itself by using Hughes who is a contested figure within black history (Bravmann, 320. This point will be discussed further below). Affirming and complicating Fanon's call for the creation of a new history, a history of decolonization, Julien visualizes a new representation of history as well as different ways of thinking about history in relation to the present through a number of representational strategies.

Julien's engagement and work with Langston Hughes as a historical figure resonates with and speaks to Bhabha's discussion of remembering Fanon. To remember Fanon involves "a painful re-membering, a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present", contends Bhabha (63). Julien explains the painstaking work involved with re-membering Hughes in an interview with Fisher, noting that he acted as a detective in search for clues which were only available in fragments (66). The pieces however "didn't fit properly and so [Hughes and the Harlem Renaissance] became a kind of enigma, a kind of ghost narrative" (ibid.). It became important for Julien to visualize the absences and silences that were not part of the official history of the Harlem Renaissance and Langston Hughes, to emphasize the gay presence during the Renasissance (ibid.). Fisher draws on Julien's points further, suggesting that detective work is an act of *looking* which assumes that "a crime has already been committed" (60). In this case, a number of injustices may have been committed including the obliteration of queer and/or other supposedly threatening traces of Hughes's life and the life of the Harlem Renaissance. Fisher writes that the detective attempts to find what has not been written into the official records of history "but which existed somewhere – possibly in someone's imaginary life, in their dreams, in their memories, in their photoalbums" (ibid.). "History", asserts Fisher, "produces enigmas" and Hughes is one such enigma (ibid.). The "looking" in Julien's title *Looking for Langston* is part of a re-membering, a difficult, and painful detective work of finding and working against historical silences:

> 'Looking' emerges as the fundamental trope [in *Looking for Langston*]: looking because that is what one does when one recalls the past; looking because it already testifies to an absence at the centre; looking because it is a political imperative in the face of a hegemony which is perpetually 'covering up' a past it cannot absorb; looking because film is a scopic medium. (Fisher 61)

Julien re-members, brings together fragments of history and this re-membering is a struggle against historical silences.

Julien's re-membering, "looking", or detective work can furthermore be characterized as an act of translation. By piecing together fragments of history, Julien fulfills the sort of translational work that Mercer, drawing on Gloria Anzaldua, describes. Mercer suggests that queer folks cross cultures and transfer ideas from one culture to another and this constitutes queer folks as translators ("Decolonization" 121). I would also submit that queer folks not only cross "cultures", they also transfer ideas from one time period to another (the act of re-membering), from one space to another (the question of diaspora), and in more broader terms from one social movement to another, perhaps even on a global scale, though I would note also that this work of translation is not limited to queers[1]. This question of social movements forms part of the work of translation that Julien and Fanon are engaged with. Especially relevant to the question of decolonizing history and the history of decolonization is the act of translation over time, linking the past to the present and perhaps even to the future.

Both Julien and Fanon articulate the connections between the past and present. Hall brings attention to Fanon's point that present-day decolonization struggles turn to the past to open up an independent and free future: The history of resistance, of great freedom fighters such as "Behanzin, Soundiata, Samory, Abdel Kader—all spring again to life with peculiar intensity" and resistance struggles put "an end to the static period begun by colonization, [and…] make history" (Fanon, *Wretched* 69 in Hall, "After-life" 69). Explaining Julien's interest in the past and present, Mercer states that the term

[1] This is the sort of translational work that Fanon conducts when Sartre writes that "the Third World finds *itself* and speaks to *itself* through his [Fanon's] voice" (10), bringing Third World struggles together.

"Sankofa", which is the name of the filmmaking workshop that produced *Looking for Langston*, is based in Akan culture in Ghana and it is a symbol that "concerns knowledge of the past to understand the present and the future" (Kenny 8). Gates points out, however, that the history that Sankofa is interested in is not a positivist history (80), or as Mercer puts it, they are not concerned with history as a search for a concealed truth or singular story (Kenny 7). Instead, Sankofa is interested in the past as a site to think about the present, and the problems and issues in the present (ibid.). Both Mercer and Gates, furthermore, instructively point out that social identities are shaped by how collectivities imagine and remember "[their] relationship to the past" (Mercer, "Dark" 226), identities then "represent the way we participate in an historical narrative" (Gates 77). Here the past and present are not completely separate, as Munoz may be suggesting: Within *Looking* Munoz identifies an "historical self" which is a counter-history and a present self that represents the pleasures and dangers of being queer in the present, and the two selves produce a whole (60). I am interested in this idea of the "whole" which may be identified as the voice that states "'I long for my past'" in Hemphill's "Under Certain Circumstances", which forms part of the struggle to build a black gay identity (hooks 199). The past and present are intertwined, interconnected and co-constitutive, then, for both Fanon and Julien. However, the past that Julien and Sankofa Film and Video are concerned with, to reiterate Gates's and Mercer's points above, is not a positivist history as if there is a hidden truth and coherent story to reveal (like one's sexuality as described in chapter one). Julien works against the prevailing conception of history that has been used to frame existing heterosexist histories of Langston Hughes's life.

The prevailing approach to writing history can be detected in Arnold Rampersad's

biography of Langston Hughes, a biography that has been criticized for its assertion that Hughes was not gay. Nero, in particular, writes that Rampersad's two-volume biographical work on Langston Hughes must be interrogated especially in light of Rampersad's use of psychology to "prove" that Hughes was not gay (188-9). Nero identifies and examines the homophobia and heterosexism in Rampersad's denial of Hughes's purported homosexuality, despite evidence of Hughes's relations with men and his support for gay and lesbian struggles. Although Nero tries to provide counter-evidence against Rampersad's denial of Hughes's queer identity, a strategy which does not quite challenge a positivist writing of history and the assertion of truths, Nero does importantly admit that even if an individual does not identify as gay this does not mean that that person does not have homoerotic desires (194). Nero suspects however that Rampersad's insistence on Hughes's straight identity is a result of George Bass's, the executor of the Hughes estate, endeavor to maintain an image of Hughes as straight (194-5), an issue that will be discussed below. Bravmann also contributes to Nero's analysis by bringing attention to the representation of Hughes's sexuality as infantile and innocent, a representation which Bravmann concedes is aligned with heteronormative constructions of sexuality (315). Hughes refused to be labeled homosexual, notes Bravmann drawing on Rampersad, but Hughes refused to be labeled straight as well (316). For Bravmann the question of history and Hughes is not whether Hughes was straight or gay, instead Bravmann is interested in a larger interrogation of history and the reinscription of particular notions of identity:

> Whether successful or not, the persistent efforts—by homophobes and homosexuals alike—to identify Hughes's sexual orientation are destined to reinscribe Western notions of an essential truth in sexuality. Further, given the scanty and equivocal historical record of Hughes's sexuality, the failure to document a well-supported 'gay hypothesis' seems to be inevitable and thus serves to reproduce, or at least does nothing to contravert,

complex historical silences surrounding black male existence. (318)

Bravmann's insights about "an essential truth in sexuality" and Mercer's previously cited point about a hidden truth or story in history echo one another and highlight the sort of underlying assumptions about sexuality that enable Rampersad to write a homophobic biography of Hughes.

Turning to another prevailing representation of Hughes's life: the film *Langston Hughes* by Richard Rogers is not concerned with Hughes's sexuality but is instead interested in describing Hughes as a man who was committed to the plight of "his race". The film conforms to a linear timeline and linear narrative of Hughes's life by detailing biographical events in chronological order through each decade of Hughes's life. James Baldwin, Arnold Rampersad, Leopold Senghor and Amiri Baraka are some of Hughes's associates who are interviewed in the film. From the outset of the film Hughes's life is related to Africa and his commitment to "the race" through footage taken off the shores of what may be Senegal. The film reproduces what Gates calls the "burden of representation" that is placed on black artists and intellectuals by other black people; Gates notes that Hughes was one such figure who "was elected popularly to serve as our "representative Negro" and as the poet of his race; and this burden of representation bore heavily upon him, and shaped his life and work (82). In an interview with Gilroy, Julien explains that Hughes was not only important to Julien in terms of his sexuality but also because of the pressures he faced as an artist, pressures that rewrite Hughes's history in particular ways: "The power of the official, respectable histories that can form around the memory of the black artist is something that I fear", states Julien (Gilroy, "Climbing"172). Roger's linear narrative of Langston Hughes as a "race man" is the sort

of work and representation that stands in sharp contrast with *Looking*. Indeed, Julien's *Looking* works against the sort of representational practices of Rogers and Rampersad.

Julien intervenes in this limiting, homophobic writing of Langston Hughes's life by disrupting hegemonic filmic practices of representing and constructing identity. Fisher firstly identifies the weight or difficulty of Julien's undertaking. *Looking for Langston*, writes Fisher, grapples with the question of absences or "those things that are culturally visible only 'in the dark'" such as queer identities and subcultures as well as the Harlem Renaissance or what Fisher refers to as "black modernism" (59). The question then becomes how does one represent an absence? Julien confronts these absences by moving away from dominant documentary, and biography-writing practices (for example, Rampersad's work), notes Mercer, who points out that the move away from dominant practices of documentary realism is part of an attempt to demonstrate that a single work cannot be wholly representative of black experience and that the plurality and multiplicities of black identities instead need to be represented ("Dark" 221). Julien employs two filmic strategies that challenge these prevailing documentary practices. The first strategy involves Julien's notion of a "meditation" on the Harlem Renaissance. The second includes Julien's critical use of and confrontation with the colonial archive by creating a montage of archival footage layered with other images and sound. Tied to this second strategy is Julien's deployment of a diasporic perspective that links the past with the present. Julien, then, "makes critical interventions into the ideology of literal representation, and troubles the enforced boundaries between proper history and fictional recuperations of the past." (Bravmann 319). This filmic approach enables Julien to embrace the ambiguities that Hughes's life presents (Gates 83) without becoming

concerned with the "truths" of Hughes's life (Kenny 8). Julien also avoids essentializing Hughes, through the strategies mentioned above, as a black gay cultural icon, making questions of power and representation central to his work (Mercer "Skin" 199). *Looking* then can be considered a "counter-history"(Gates 80) not only because it challenges the heterosexist and homophobic biographies written on Hughes thusfar (Bravmann 319). It also brings attention to the debates around the meaning of the Harlem Renaissance itself through its meditation strategy (Gilroy, "Climbing"169), and introduces a different and difficult representation and re-membering of Hughes and the Renaissance, which Gates reminds us was just as gay as it was black (78). Returning again to Bravmann's critical reading of *Looking* and his discussion of queer identities and prevailing representations of history, or what he calls the "heterosexualization of history" (312), Bravmann reminds us that there are problems with queer politics and history because "'gay identity'" is contingent and discourses of homosexuality are medicalized and defined by juridical terms (311). In other words, attempting to fix queer figures of the past constructs identity and politics in static terms (Bravmann 312), and this is the sort of history that Julien's *Looking* works against.

The first representational strategy that Julien employs in his counter-history revolves around the imaginary, dreams, and the question of "meditation". Both Mercer and Jha (40) point out that *Looking* is not concerned with the truths of Hughes's sexuality (a practice which would otherwise fix identity, as noted above by Bravmann), but is instead a "poetic meditation" on the Harlem Renaissance (Mercer, "Dark" 223). Hooks also notes that Julien works with the absences and mysteries of Hughes and the Renaissance (197) by offering a meditation on Langston Hughes and the Renaissance

rather than a definitive last word on the two subjects. Mercer, here, underscores the role of fantasy in the film which he suggests signals the "loss of access to the object of desire" ("Dark" 225) that is, Langston Hughes himself. The place of fantasy, the imagination, meditation and thought in *Looking* that Julien evokes speaks to Gates's point that because particular histories may not be retrievable they instead "invite imaginative reconstruction" (77). The use of imaginative reconstruction and meditation in Julien's film subvert prevailing practices of writing history precisely because, as Bravmann notes, they do not fix or present a singular version of history as authoritative and final (320). The meditation strategy asks audiences to think and imagine rather than be told about the final word of history (ibid.). Silverman also notes that the meditation approach of *Looking* moves away from biography and presents a search without a conclusion (105). In other words, Julien does not fix meanings about Hughes and the Renaissance. Diawara here notes another meaning of "looking" in the film's title: looking requires audiences to imagine and fantasize (99). The dream-like quality of the film, Fisher argues, draws from the poetics of Hughes's "Montage of a Dream Deferred" (59). I would also add, once again, that Julien draws heavily from Bruce Nugent's "Smoke, Lilies and Jade". Smoke from cigars and cigarettes and the smoke that emanates from the funeral scene seem to reference Nugent's repeated references to Alex's smoking habits and Alex's thought that "truly smoke was like imagination" (78). Julien employs a meditation strategy that works with the absences in histories of Hughes's life and the Renaissance, and to keep meanings and histories open and multiple. In a sense, history is left to one's imagination.

Julien's meditation and use of dreams, fantasy and the imaginary in *Looking* are also part of a politics of the decolonizing struggle. Tawadros and Dexter, in their forward

to the Mirage exhibit, point out that the term "mirage" signals "the themes of deception, illusion, *fantasy*, *dream*, *imagination* and vision which run through *Black Skin, White Masks*" (11, italics mine). The theme of dreams is also evident in *Wretched of the Earth*, where we come across Fanon's references to the emancipatory thrust of dreams. Once again, Fanon points out that the native dreams of "muscular prowess; his dreams are of action and of aggression. I dream I am jumping, swimming, running climbing" (52). This aggression, as noted in chapter one, is part of a violent decolonizing struggle where the native dreams of "setting himself up in the settler's place" (Fanon, *Wretched* 39). In her video poem on the separation of two lesbian lovers across discriminatory borders constructed by Canadian immigration policies, Sheila James points out that the two lovers do not "measure the cost of separation. Instead [they] choose the victory of *imagining*". Julien's use of imaginative reconstruction of histories signals this emancipatory thrust of dreams that form part of a politics of decolonization.

A second representational strategy employed by Julien involves decolonizing the "colonial archive" by re-appropriating, queering and layering images, sound and text to create a uniquely insurgent filmic montage. In an interview with Coco Fusco on his documentary on Frantz Fanon, Julien explains that during his research for the film he found archival footage of Fanon narrated by the French and British (57). Similar to his representational approach in *Looking*, Julien used this footage from the colonial archive; in order to "make the footage re-signify a different meaning from its original intention", Julien changed the colour and speed of the film and gave it a different soundtrack (ibid.). This practice of re-signifying, recasting and reframing colonial texts is referred to by Julien as "the un-doing of the colonial archive" (ibid.). In *Looking*, then, Julien uses black

and white archival footage of Harlem streets and clubs, such as the heterosexual space of the Cotton Club, and queers them, layering them for example with the queer-positive music of Blackberri (Diawara 100). As well, Julien's use of the cinematic montage where he juxtaposes various texts and materials such as poems, photographs and music enables him to self-represent black gay male subjectivities, countering the heterosexist erasure of their lives (Munoz 60). In other words, the montage strategy of layering, combining and juxtaposing various colonial, heteronormative texts not only challenges its hegemonic meanings but it also works with and around what is absent or silenced from the colonial archive to point to these absences and create new meanings. Walcott also notes in his article on the influence of Julien on Cheryl Dunye's and Dana Inkster's work, that Julien's work signals an "archive fever" which forms a diasporic filmmaking sensibility (14). He notes that Julien and Dunye in particular treat archives as open and fictional entities in their filmic search for and discussion of historic black queer figures (ibid.). With little writing on the queer Harlem Renaissance, Julien explains that in his attempt to visualize a black gay male presence during the Renaissance he had to turn to the photographs of James Van Der Zee and George Platt Lynes (Fisher 67). By restaging, re-presenting, and re-configuring these photographs in the context of his film, he challenges and rewrites the racialized meanings inscribed in Lynes's and even Mapplethorpe's photographs, as mentioned earlier (Jha 45; Mercer, "Avid" 16). The plurality of texts that Julien's montage employs echoes the polyvocality or "multiple points of view" that Mercer identifies in Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* ("Busy" 19). Fanon draws on the "autobiographical, clinical, sociological, poetical, philosophical, political" to talk about and talk against colonialism (ibid.) creating, perhaps, a sort of textual montage. The

montage strategy, importantly notes Arroyo, is a critical representational practice that reminds viewers that images and actions are constructed and this is precisely what Julien suggests in *Looking* ("Films" 336 footnote 10). Julien's cinematic montage attempts to decolonize the colonial archive and colonial histories themselves. This political thrust of Julien's montage strategy as with any political endeavor, however, was inevitably met with opposition.

The response from Langston Hughes's estate to Julien's practice of confronting and re-appropriating the colonial archive and heterosexualized histories in *Looking* demonstrates the continued struggles over representational practices and the continued efforts on the part of Hughes's estate to author heterosexist and closed histories of Hughes. The executor of Hughes's estate, George Bass, fought against the New York screenings of *Looking* and ordered that Hughes's poetry be excised from the American version of the film, demonstrating the estate's refusal to associate Hughes with homoeroticism (Julien, "Black is" 75). Bravmann points out that the censorship of Julien's film signals the estate's misreading of Julien's film as a literal association of Hughes with homosexuality (320). Because of this controversy around Hughes's sexuality, Bravmann notes that Julien decided to work with Hughes rather than a "self-identified gay man such as Baldwin" (320). Although Julien's film is precisely concerned with the difficulties and complexities of identities, the estate's action nonetheless points to the continued fixing and policing of identities, and to relations of power in representational practices which continue to heterosexualize the Harlem Renaissance (Jha 33). The response from the Hughes estate to Julien's re-appropriation of historical archives points to the threatening and unsettling thrust that the re-signification of these

texts presents, which prompted the estate to censor the film itself.

Returning to Julien's engagement and work with the archive, *Looking* disrupts colonial, modernist representations of time as linear, progressive and contained as if time were locked into distinct, identifiable periods. Diawara points out that Julien "sutures time" by incorporating the Riverside radio announcement of Hughes's death with wardrobe from the 1960s, coupled with a 1920s black and white film aesthetic, which is executed by contemporary British actors in the film, creating a mood of multiple eras (96). "This temporal movement," writes Bravmann, "first underlines then undermines the differences between past and present, memory and imagination, historical trace and contemporary representation which have consistently been integral to historiography, biography and documentary" (321). Julien's suturing of time, then, attempts to unsettle binary constructions of not only time as past and present, but also of identities and the borders that construct separations of identities and peoples. This montage strategy of merging time periods together may even suggest how an imaginary and hopeful political alliance or convergence of radical figures from the past may be possible. Gates, for example, writes that images in *Looking* flow between the "filmic present and the archival past" bringing together, again through montage, Bruce Nugent, Hughes, and Baldwin in one filmic space (78). Within this filmic space, then we also hear

> an interchange of voices, inflections, and accents, including Stuart Hall, I believe, Hilton Als; Langston Hughes reading his own work; Toni Morrison reading Baldwin; and Erick Ray Evans reading Bruce Nugent. The result is an interlacement, an enmeshment of past and present, the blues, jazz, Motown, and contemporary dance music, London and New York: a transtemporal dialogue on the nature of identity and desire and history. (ibid.)

This "interlacement" of past and present brings together a wide range of black writers and artists from different historical moments and from different geographical spaces pointing to what many writers have identified in Julien's work: the diasporic thrust of *Looking*.

Julien's coupling of the past with the present forms a "diasporic perspective" and "'diasporic aesthetic'" (Otalvaro-Hormillosa 104) that links together black writers and artists in one filmic space. This diasporic perspective is mobilized by Julien to re-examine questions of blackness, sexuality and the Harlem Renaissance (Julien "Black" 74), raising questions about "queer" in these struggles. How does the study of diasporas or how does a diasporic perspective contribute to the debates around race, histories and identities? Julien's work engages with the study of diaspora as discussed by writers such as Gilroy, Mirzoeff and Braziel, and Mannur which I turn to below.

In *The Black Atlantic* Paul Gilroy firstly points out to readers that his study is not about racial purity, but is instead about "the inescapable hybridity and intermixture of ideas" (xi). He sets out to consider questions of ethnic identity with the aim of working against ethnic absolutism in black political culture (5). His work intervenes in the national foci of British cultural studies with its preoccupation with England and Englishness (6). Against the closure of categories and identities, then, Gilroy moves toward the "instability and mutability of identities which are always unfinished, always being remade" (ibid.). Gilroy suggests that cultural historians ought to consider the Atlantic as a large, complex unit of analysis which provides a "transnational and intercultural perspective" (14). The black Atlantic is a modern political formation that transcends boundaries of nation-state and national-ethnic identities (19). Instead of subscribing to modern black thought's preoccupation with identity as roots and rootedness, Gilroy proposes theorizing identity as a process of movement and mediation, in other words as routes (19). The history of the black Atlantic is punctuated by movement, relocation, displacement and restlessness (Gilroy 133). Summarizing the

work of the journal *Presence Africaine*, Gilroy points out that the unity of cultures was not based on a common African heritage but was instead formed by the "'Colonial experience'" such as slavery, racism and anti-colonial nationalisms as well as the technological and political features of modernity that make diasporic lives converge (195). Mirzoeff also adds that diaspora is not singular or isolated, for example, African and Jewish diasporas influence each other (2). Importantly, diasporas cannot be fully known, there is an uncertainty and instability about them (ibid. 2). Echoing Gilroy, Mirzoeff similarly writes that diaspora is an expression of a doubleness, difference and deferral, of an indeterminate future and past (6). Diasporas create a "'multiple viewpoint'" in diasporic visual productions, avoiding a singular vision or perspective and moving toward "a forward-looking, transcultural and transitive place from which to look and be seen" (ibid.). Braziel and Mannur also add that "[d]iasporic subjects are marked by hybridity and heterogeneity—cultural, linguistic, ethnic, national—and these subjects are defined by a traversal of the boundaries demarcating nation and disapora" (5). Diaspora, then, is not marked by essences or purity, or by stable and fixed notions of home and identity, but are instead marked by heterogeneity and diversity (ibid. 5-6). The diasporic perspective that Julien employs in his film to interrogate black identities draws from and in turn informs this vast and rich study of diasporas which I will discuss below.

Julien employs a diasporic perspective to challenge hegemonic constructions of black identities and sexualities by queering or considering the queer pitch of black diasporas. The dedication of *Looking* to the memory of Langston Hughes and James Baldwin is a queer intervention into black diasporas which points out that black gays and lesbians have been at the centre of black cultural activities: When you consider the

diasporic culture, Hughes and Baldwin are "the most visible figures of our continuity in black history", write Mercer and Julien ("Race" 126). Munoz identifies two poles in *Looking* that engage in a form of "transhistorical dialogue" reminiscent of the "traditional African-American oral trope known as 'call-and-response'" (61), or the tradition of antiphony which Gilroy also discusses in *The Black Atlantic*. The first pole includes gay men of the Harlem Renaissance such as "Hughes, Countee Cullen, Alain Locke, Wallace Thurman, Bruce Nugent, and Claude McKay" and the second pole includes "contemporary cultural activists" such as Essex Hemphill (ibid.). The transhistorical dialogue of black diasporas can be identified in Munoz's discussion of the seamless interweaving of Bessie Smith's music, who identified as queer, with Blackberri's voice in *Looking* (62). Julien's work may even suggest how queer black diasporas can be visualized, represented and imagined. The dedication of *Looking* to Baldwin is striking in the context of Baldwin's life which was marked by movement across the Atlantic. Dissatisfied with the sexual culture of New York City, Baldwin left New York for Paris in 1948, explaining that if he did not leave he would either have killed someone or have been killed (Dievler 162-3). In *Another Country* (1962), Baldwin depicts a country troubled by categories that limit sexualities and he suggests that one ought to go to "'another country'" to desert these categories (ibid. 163)[2]. Julien's use of a diasporic perspective may introduce and entertain the idea of a black queer diaspora, challenging notions then of a static, fixed blackness.

A diasporic perspective and the formation and idea of a black queer diaspora, however, does not necessarily mean that nations and national identity are irrelevant and

[2] Bauman, however, points out that the ability to travel and consume other places is a privilege that tourists and so-called nomads exercise at the expense of vagabonds and others who are not permitted to move as freely with self-determination (87).

counter-productive to a radical politics of gender, sexuality and decolonization. Walcott importantly notes that although "diasporic subjects" look beyond national formations, they also refer back to their nations and make demands of them (12). Walcott writes that this is a contradictory condition of diasporas:

> Diasporic desires for a nation-state always find those nation-states wanting, the boundaries restrictive. Yet nations offer possibilities from which a diasporic politics of political identification, affiliation and solidarity might be launched (ibid.).

Here, Walcott cites Julien's references to black British communities and the wider black diaspora in *Looking* and in his later film *The Attendant* (ibid.). Gilroy similarly writes that diaspora and national perspectives are not binary oppositions. Here Gilroy examines *Blake* by Martin Delany which Gilroy uses to support his argument against ethnic absolutisms since Delany's text affirms both the "intercultural and transnational", writes Gilroy (29). I would suggest here that thinking across and through both diasporas and nations is a necessary part of decolonizing struggles as Fanon's work points us to below.

Of nations and diaporas: Building political solidarities

In the second half of the excerpt from Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth* cited at the beginning of this chapter, Fanon writes that the colonized can only end their oppression by bringing the history of colonization to an end and this requires bringing into existence "the history of the *nation*—the history of decolonization" (italic mine, 51). Here Fanon links the end of the history of colonization with the formation of the nation. Fanon is pointing out that decolonization movements of the twentieth century turned to nationalism and fought to form independent nation-states in order to end colonial rule. This link between decolonization and nationalism is discussed briefly by Hardt and Negri in relation to Fanon. Hardt and Negri consider historic forms of resistance against colonial domination within their larger inquiry into political movements against their

notion of a present-day empire which I turn to below.

Hardt and Negri critically examine the question of nationalism in relation to anti-colonial struggles in *Empire*. They rename anti-colonial nationalism as "subaltern nationalism" (105) and they acknowledge that the nation, in the non-European context, is a weapon for change and revolution, which is in contrast to prevailing conceptions of the nation as a tool of domination (106). Subaltern nationalism serves two primary functions: The first includes the struggle to gain the right to self-determination for the colonized and to provide the colonized with access to political control which the dominant (colonial) powers possess (ibid.). The colonized deploy the concept of the nation to end foreign occupation of their land and to build protective walls in defence against foreign capital (ibid.). Secondly, Hardt and Negri point out the function of nationalism as an ideological weapon to challenge the prevailing (colonial) discourses that construct the dominated population as inferior. This form of nationalism allowed the colonized to affirm their dignity and legitimize their demands for independence and equality (ibid.). Subaltern nationalism, according to Hardt and Negri,

> *is progressive strictly as a fortified line of defense against more powerful external forces*... however...[t]he flip side of the structure that resists foreign powers is itself a dominating power that exerts an equal and opposite internal oppression, repressing internal difference and opposition in the name of national identity, unity, and security (ibid.).

Hardt and Negri go on to discuss the role of nationalism in unifying diasporic communities of displaced people globally but note the regressive tendency of nationalism, such as black nationalism in the United States (107). Subaltern nationalism, for Hardt and Negri, is a double-edged sword: it is both progressive (for example, when the nation is subordinated and is no longer sovereign or it no longer exists) and

reactionary (when it destroys multiplicity, imposes uniformity and homogeneity, and begins to form a sovereign state) (109).

Hardt and Negri address several crucial points here about subaltern nationalism that might be considered in relation to Fanon's text. Fanon outlines the repressive features of nationalism but affirms its revolutionary potential: "Decolonization unifies that people (the colonized) by the radical decision to remove from it its heterogeneity, and by unifying it on a national, sometimes a racial, basis" (46). The anti-colonial strategy of removing difference, which Fanon supports above, is problematic in many present-day organizing contexts. However, Hardt and Negri gloss over the progressive role of nationalism in terms of affirming the dignity, histories, productivity and culture of colonized peoples. They simply identify the defensive role of nationalism as the sole progressive feature of the nation, and deny the possibility of a sense of national pride among the newly independent subaltern classes. Emphasizing the limitations of subaltern nationalism, Hardt and Negri furthermore describe the formation of a decolonised independent state as the "poisoned gift of national liberation" (132). They write that the progressive features of nationalism are always accompanied by "powerful structures of internal domination", as well, "[t]he nationalism of anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggles effectively functions in reverse, and the liberated counties find themselves subordinated in the international economic order" (132-133). Hardt and Negri importantly point out some of the problems with nationalism.

However Fanon does not ignore the "pitfalls" of national culture or nationalism in the anti-colonial struggle. Firstly, Fanon makes it clear that the battle against colonialism need not run on strictly nationalist lines, since the native also spends a great deal of time

on issues such as forced labour, corporal punishment, to name a few examples (148). Fanon recognizes that when a nation is based on 'race', then certain tribes will be preferred by the state. As well, Fanon does in fact point out that the national economy will still be dependent on the European economy if the national middle class is formed in the independent nation (152). Fanon calls this economic dependency neo-colonialism and cites the casinos built in Havana and Mexico as disturbing examples of the West's impact on the independent nation's economy (153-154). For Fanon, one of the pitfalls of national independence is the formation and existence of a national bourgeoisie class. Fanon also points out the problems with the national party: The party becomes a means for private advancement and as a result, it develops into an anti-democratic and coercive force (171). One of Fanon's most interesting claims in his chapter on the pitfalls of nationalism is his assertion that nationalism will end once independence is achieved (202). Here, Fanon seems to approve of the eventual dissolution of nationalism. The question, however, is how does this occur? Fanon furthermore writes that nationalism is not a political doctrine or program. In order to avoid regression, rapid steps need to be taken to transform national consciousness into political and social consciousness (203). In other words, the "nation's effort must constantly be adjusted into the general background of underdeveloped countries. The battle line against hunger, against ignorance, against poverty, and against unawareness ought to be ever present in the muscles and the intelligences of men and women" (ibid.). Fanon, however, warns readers against achieving political consciousness before national consciousness, otherwise past divisions among different tribes, for example, will separate the nation (204). The limitations and

dangers of nationalism are addressed by Fanon but he does not abandon organizing on the basis of the nation.

In fact, Fanon's vision for anti-colonial organizing is two-fold, and it reflects Walcott's and Gilroy's points about the links between diaspora and nations. In addition to supporting national independence movements and the formation of decolonized nation-states, Fanon's vision for anti-colonial organizing is global or international. In particular, in *Wretched of the Earth* Fanon is concerned about transnational, global political movements, solidarities and constituencies. He writes that the defeat of the French in Dien Bien Phu in 1954 was not only a victory for the Vietnamese people, but was also a victory for colonized peoples around the world who are involved in anti-colonial struggles (Fanon, *Wretched* 70). News stories about anti-colonial activists and activities around the world are of interest to decolonizing struggles worldwide, making local struggles global: "Every meeting held, every act of represson [sic] committed, reverberates in the international arena" (ibid. 75). Here Fanon cites the example of the Sharpeville murders which shocked the world and brought attention to the brutality of apartheid in South Africa (ibid.). Fanon also insists that colonized people realize that they are living in an era of international stress or the Cold War (76). The colonized are buying transistor radios to connect with uprisings around different parts of the world and furthermore, the colonized

> understand very well Phouma and Phoumi [Laos], Lumumba and Tshombe [Congo], Ahidjo and Moumie [Cameroon], Kenyatta, and the men who are pushed forward regularly to replace him. They understand all these figures very well, for they can unmask the forces working behind them. The native and the underdeveloped man are today political animals in the most universal sense of the word (81).

Fanon writes that the Third World is not interested in world news about the affairs of

elites, but instead, they desire to hear about experiments in Argentina and Burma to overcome illiteracy or the tyranny of their leaders (203). Fanon's work suggests that a Third World, international solidarity and awareness is a necessary part of decolonizing struggles. National struggles ought to be linked to the international arena of politics – they simply cannot afford to be isolated or unaware of actions taking place around the world. The two levels of activism are both intimately tied together, and this point may echo Walcott's assertion that the move beyond the nation-state and the launching of political solidarities from the nation-state is a contradiction and a reality of diasporas.

Julien visualizes this contradiction, as Walcott noted above, and he seems to do this not only through his montage strategy which weaves together texts from different time periods and geographical locations, but also through the scene in the field cited at the beginning of this chapter. This particular scene is a dream sequence, a fantasy of Alex who, in the previous sequence, sat at the bar of the Wake looking at Beauty. The scene visualizes Bruce Nugent's "Smoke, Lilies and Jade". Before entering the scene of Nugent's poetic work, Alex stares into the camera and the sound of waves moving and crashing can be heard, which may be signaling movements across water, perhaps even the Atlantic (or Gilroy's black Atlantic) as Alex enters the dream sequence. There is a body lying in a bed in an empty room, then the sequence is cut into the scene in the marshland where Alex walks tall and confidently. Julien slows down the pace of Alex's walk by slowing down the speed of the film, it seems. The scene is then interrupted by a short sequence in which Kurt takes off his top in front of Beauty, a visual disruption that signals the sort of breaks and changes in the flows of desire that Deleuze and Guattari describe (to recall points made in the introduction). We then return to the scene in the

marshland. Alex continues to walk with a destination in mind, it appears. He is dressed in the suit he was wearing at the club. The grass is short in this marshland, visualizing the field that Nugent describes in his work. Small ponds are interspersed in the marshland and Alex's reflection is visible in the pond. Tall, white streamer-like flags are lined up along the path that Alex walks, the flags ripple in the wind. The scene is magnificently and beautifully staged. Moreover this is the only scene in the film shot outside during the day, the field itself seems vast and endless similar to the wide open spaces of the flows of desire that Deleuze and Guattari describe. Alex meets Beauty in this wide, open space and is delighted, but Beauty soon disappears and Alex becomes confused. The camera then rises up toward the sky, looking down on Alex. The camera stunts Alex's presence within this wide open landscape. In contrast with Alex's confident entrance into this field the landscape now seems to engulf him once Beauty disappears.

This scene carves out or visualizes a space that is ambiguous and it is through this unknown-space or territory that the national and the diasporic meet. Because this scene breaks dramatically away from the dark indoor and outdoor scenes which are for the most part represent either Harlem or London, this space sits ambiguously as possibly Britain or America – its exact location becomes almost irrelevant though because it is a dream, an imagined space. But it is in this space (perhaps a diasporic space, a global space) that nationally marked bodies, poetry and time periods meet. To combine and draw again from Diawara's (96) and Gates's (78) analyses cited earlier about Julien's suturing of time, combining present-day and past events and figures in one filmic space, Julien also brings together British actors to play Alex/Langston Hughes and he uses Nugent's poem not only to speak to a queer Harlem Renaissance, but also to perhaps speak to black queer

men in Britain. This is Julien's own way of imagining and building political alliances through a resistant, diasporic queer desire. The meeting between Alex and Beauty in the field can be read as a meeting of not only different time periods, but also as a meeting of various movements (artistic and political movements), activists, thinkers and desires through and across national boundaries and identities. This imaginary space and imaginary meeting visualizes black men as loving instead of hating one another and this use of dreams and imagination is in marked contrast with the violent dreams of usurping the colonizer that Fanon describes.

To summarize this chapter, then, Fanon and Julien both identify the act of writing histories as a site of anti-colonial and queer liberation struggles respectively. Julien, in particular, works against heteronormative biographies of Hughes by offering a counter-history of Hughes's life (and desires) and the Harlem Renaissance. He does so by creating a montage of and meditation on Hughes's life and the Harlem Renaissance and by employing a diasporic perspective. Gilroy and Walcott however complicate notions of diaspora by proposing that diasporas are tied, in various ways, to nations. Both Fanon and Julien engage with the links between nations and the international (more so by Fanon) and diasporas (Julien), demonstrating the threads and layers of building solidarities and imagining movements within and across nations.

It [the victory of decolonization] will not be without fearful losses; the colonial army becomes ferocious; the country is marked out, there are mopping-up operations, transfers of population, reprisal expeditions, and they massacre women and children. He [the ALN, National Army of Liberation in Algeria, soldier] knows this; this new man begins his life as a man at the end of it; he considers himself as a potential corpse. He will be killed; not only does he accept this risk, he's sure of it. This potential dead man has lost his wife and his children; he has seen so many dying men that he prefers victory to survival; others, not he, will have the fruits of victory; he is too weary of it all. [...] [The ALN soldier] finds [humanity] beyond torture and death. [...] The child of violence, at every moment he draws from it his humanity. (Sartre, *Wretched of the Earth* 23-24)

The film opens with archival footage of a Harlem train. We hear the train moving along rhythmically on its track. Toni Morrison's voice is then heard. She speaks softly, but by the tone of her voice she appears to be delivering a speech: "One would much rather be home with one's compatriots rather than be detested by them," Morrison states. The camera lovingly reveals the face of a young man who slowly sheds a tear, the camera then pans to a casket and in it lays Isaac Julien. The coffin is luxuriously lined with rippled-folds of silk. A man, dressed in a fine suit looks down into the coffin. Two women are also dressed in rich accoutrements and they peer into the coffin, expressionless. A long shot of the mourners reveals a room filled with flowers, and the casket and mourners standing in the centre of the room. A tall, thin pillar of smoke delicately rises from what appears to be a small pot of burning incense. Candles are lit all around them. The camera leaves this scene of motionless mourners, and in one movement, descends to a scene below the funeral, a scene of men frozen in a dance pose. Smoke also rises from this scene, but the smoke emanates from cigarettes. This is the opening scene of *Looking for Langston*. The film begins with an ending: death.

Death forms a powerful, disturbing and unsettling backdrop for both Fanon's and Julien's work. This third and final chapter will explore the place and treatment of death in the works of both authors. For Fanon, death is part of the decolonizing struggle, in other words it is equated with liberation and the emergence of an independent nation. Julien similarly discusses the question of death, but he does so within the context of the AIDS crisis and queer liberation struggles, adding further layers of complexity to an analysis of the meanings of death. Julien's discussion of death is tied heavily to questions of mourning, which Fanon, however, curiously ignores. Drawing on the work of Munoz, Moon and others I emphasize their point that queer mourning practices which respond to the AIDS crisis collectivize mourning, and this collectivization is also tied to questions of building solidarities and liberation movements. Julien's visual poetics of resistant desire is articulated here through the visualization and use of Essex Hemphill's poetry, which movingly describe mourning and loss during the AIDS crisis.

Tied to the subject of death, I also want to flag attention to the place of war in both Fanon's and Julien's work. For Julien death is discussed in relation to the AIDS crisis, and the AIDS crisis is represented as a war through Essex Hemphill's poetry (to be discussed further below). The soldiers in this war against AIDS are queer men who love one another. They are in combat with a disease that is claiming the lives of friends and lovers. For Fanon, a French veteran of the Second World War, war is a part of the psychic lives of black men: Marriott insightfully highlights the language of war that permeates Fanon's *Black Skin* by providing numerous excerpts from Fanon's text that speak of war (Marriott 69-70). Marriott also suggests that war in Fanon's text refers to the black man at war with himself (66): "black self-consciousness is already occupied by

a foreign force, an inner divide or unconscious partition [...]" (67). For example, Fanon writes that "a Negro is forever in combat with his own image" (*Black Skin* 194). This quasi-internal war that Marriott identifies is inseparable from the social or collective expressions of hate and aggression; the black man is created by European culture to allow Europeans to purge and purify themselves (Marriott 67). This is illustrated in *Black Skin* when Fanon talks about the black man being a "scapegoat for white society" and when he writes that "the Negro is in demand" for this purifying purpose (*Black Skin* 194 and 176). Returning to the language of war in Fanon's works, in *Wretched of the Earth* Fanon speaks literally of the Algerian war of independence and the casualties resulting from this war. The language of war can be read in both Julien's and Fanon's work. In contrast with Fanon's language of internal war and conflict, however, Julien's representations of war involve questions of love. Indeed, for Julien war and death become matters of caring for the living and the dead through mourning practices.

To return to the question of death, Julien at the very outset of his film includes a scene of death and the dead. Gates brings attention to this opening sequence of death, pointing out the significance of including the funeral of Langston Hughes who died in 1967; during this time (late 1960s) black figures such as Amiri Baraka wrote works against gay men (Gates, 79). Perhaps then Julien defiantly mourns Hughes's death in light of the gay bashing that prevailed at the time of his death. Munoz adds that the radio broadcast of "'In Memoriam Langston Hughes'" included at the beginning of the film and the dedication of the film to James Baldwin point to grief as "a precondition" to the film (73).

Julien's concern with death responds to the political and social crises that punctuate the period in which the film was produced. Returning to the meaning of "Sankofa" as a turning to the past to understand the present, Bhabha's definition of the act of remembrance as "a painful re-membering, a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the *trauma of the present*" offers a second important meaning (italics mine, 63). Although Julien turns to the past, to Langston Hughes and the Harlem Renaissance, Gates tellingly writes: "We look for Langston, I submit, but we discover Isaac" (77). Julien is the figure in the casket in the opening sequence of the film. The trauma of the present or what the discovery of Isaac in the casket signals is the AIDS epidemic (Diawara 96). The alarming presence of the AIDS crisis especially in communities of colour is echoed by Alvarez and Candelario who point out that since 1981 Latinos, Latinas, and African Americans are disproportionately affected by AIDS (247); Thomas Harris extends this point noting in 1992, that 30% of the population with AIDS is black (I believe Harris is referring the population in the United States. Quoted in Gates 86). The AIDS epidemic is characterized as a battlefield with fallen soldiers in the poem "Under Certain Circumstances" by Essex Hemphill, whose voice and poetry in *Looking* point to the "prominent contextualizing presence of AIDS" (Deitcher 16): "This kind of war frightens me./ I don't want to die/ sleeping with soldiers/ I don't love" (Hemphill 152). But these dead soldiers, unlike the soldiers depicted in Fanon's work, are mourned in Julien's film. Both Deitcher and Gates point to the presence of mourning in *Looking*. Gates notes that in 1987 Bruce Nugent, James Baldwin and Joseph Beam, all out black gay men, had passed away; the references to these men in the film, then, ultimately signals the place of mourning in the film (77). Adding to Gates's insight that

the film's "use of Langston Hughes and the Black tradition [are] enabling texts for Black Gays to tell their stories"(97), Deitcher writes that the presence of black gay men in history affirms the lives of black gay men at a time when many mourned those who died from AIDS (16). In *Looking*, the scene of mourning is featured not only in the beginning of the film, it reappears later on in the film as if to remind viewers to remember the dead.

The severity of and devastation wrought by the AIDS epidemic exceeded the forms and practices of representation circulating at the time Julien produced *Looking*. Arroyo in "Death, Desire and Identity" explains the deep wounds, ruptures, shocks and shifts that AIDS brought to gay male communities. He writes that over the last decade (he is writing in the nineties), in light of the AIDS pandemic, gay men have experienced a great shift in their lives – as though they were suddenly living in another world altogether, changing the way gay men live (91). Citing Douglas Crimp, Arroyo notes that gay men have lost their jobs and homes and have been denied health care prompting the community to organize services, facilities, education initiatives and centres (ibid.). These activities furthermore attempted to counter dominant images of people with AIDS by producing new representations of gay men's lives (ibid.). Arroyo argues, then, that AIDS presented "an epistemic shift in gay culture", as gay men began to change their "views of society, sexuality, bodies, relationships, time, history and culture"; in part, these changes prompted the development of what Arroyo calls a "New Queer Cinema" (91-92). Arroyo explains that "New Queer Cinema" films, including *Looking for Langtson*, grapple with AIDS and the changes AIDS has brought to gay men's lives (ibid.). These films are "purposefully stylish because they are struggling to represent a new context" explains Arroyo, and this aesthetic element is evident in Julien's film (ibid.). Mourning is a central

feature in the "New Queer Cinema" where characters, like those in *Looking*, "die for love" (Arroyo 94). Hemphill's poem "Now We Think", included in *Looking*, in particular captures this shift, where gay men are now vigilant about and aware of AIDS: "Now we think/ as we fuck/ this nut/ might kill us./ There might be/ a pin-sized hole/ in the condom./ A lethal leak./ We stop kissing/ [...] This kiss could turn/ to stone."(Hemphill 155) The poetic quality and stylized representations of gay men in *Looking* point to this new shift in representation prompted by the AIDS epidemic, as love may be lethal.

The looming threat of death and the perils of love in the age of AIDS are also evoked spatially in *Looking*. The mourning scene or the scene of Hughes's/Julien's funeral is set above the club. In one continuous shot, the camera, as if attached to a crane, descends from the scene of mourning to the club below. This spatial connection between the scene of mourning and the scene of dancing, drinking and reverie in the club below is analyzed by Munoz who astutely points out that mourning is never far removed from the "life" in *Looking* (73). The two spaces are not separate or binary opposites in gay life, writes Munoz (ibid.). In fact, the men in the club actually look lifeless in their motionless poses that mimic the fixed, impassive expression of the mourners above who almost become dead figures in relation to the men below. However if we consider the slowly rolling tear of the mourner who is first featured in the film, the almost ghostly presence of the mourners actually has "more life" than the clubbers. Munoz points out that the scene of mourning and the scene of the club are connected by a stair case (ibid.) and this connection accrues further meaning later on in the film when angels occupy what appears to be the former space of mourning. Toward the end of the film, the angels look with delight at the celebrations in the club. They even dance a little as well. A man from the

club, carrying a white flag that was featured in the scene in the field (to recall a discussion in chapter two), walks up those stairs like a soldier ready to join the angels. Silverman writes that the angels occupy a space that is heaven and the club below is earth where light from the angels sweeps over and scans the figures below, connecting both heaven and earth (116). These stairs can be read as a stairway to heaven. An even more telling and poetic connection between this heaven and earth is articulated by Hemphill's poem "The Edge" which is recited at the moment the man from earth climbs the stairs to join the angels in heaven. The poem, like the scene, anticipates the "possibility of intercourse between earth and heaven" writes Silverman (116) which denotes the connection between life and death that is formed by the threat of AIDS. It is worth citing section three of the poem at length here:

> You left me begging for things/most men thought they had/below their belts./I was reaching higher./I could throw my legs up like satellites, but I knew/I was fucking fallen *angels*./I made them feel like demigods./[…] I change the order of things/to suit my desperations./You can raise your legs,/almost touch heaven./I can be an angel,/falling. (162-3)

Silverman notes that the poem works with "two tropes […]: ascendant man and the fallen angel" which Julien visualizes and stages (117). The movement or the reversal of movement that the two tropes signify where angels fall and men climb up to heaven, suggests Silverman, denotes reciprocity between "angels and humans[,] actively bestowing the gift of love upon each other" (ibid.). The exchange between heaven and earth, angels and humans, marks a spatial proximity to death in *Looking*, visualizing the looming realities of death and the potential lethality of love in an age of AIDS.

The connection between death and love or more specifically death and desire in queer communities has a history predating the AIDS crisis, asserts Dollimore in *Death, Desire and Loss in Western Culture*. Discussing Oscar Moore's novel *A Matter of Life*

and Sex (1991), Dollimore notes that Moore discusses gay men's desires and sexual practices in relation to death and AIDS. Because Moore works with the death-desire connection in his book, critics charged him with supporting the Right's characterization of homosexuality as "death-driven, death-desiring and thereby death-dealing" (Dollimore ix). But Moore does not subscribe to a simple counter-strategy of providing "positive images" of "homosexuality=health=life", contends Dollimore (ibid.). The connection between death and desire is not an image imposed by homophobia, but it is instead intimately part of queer histories "as it is part of a more general cultural history" of the west (ibid. xii). Dollimore suggests that the "sexually dissident" may simply be more cognizant of the connection between desire and death (ibid.), which perhaps stems from a knowledge of the violence against queers for living out dissident sexualities under a heteronormative social order. Turning to the subject of death in gay fiction, Dollimore considers Baldwin's *Here Be Dragons*, in which the gay underworld is characteristically depicted as "a place of both death and redemption" a theme that is also denoted in the very title of Baldwin's book (296). The title, *Here Be Dragons*, points to this dangerous, unknown "shadowy and transient" terrain of queer urban spaces epitomized by the basement club, a place that is frequented at night for "descending" into "the soul's darker desire" (ibid.). Dollimore suggests that the gay underworld in much of gay fiction is a place where "heroes and heroines are romantic" and where "fallen figures who suffer [may] redeem, or at least atone for, that alienation which they find at the heart of deviant desire" (297). It is this dance between death and desire that finds its expression in *Looking*.

Julien visually carves out these "shadowy and transient" queer urban spaces throughout *Looking,* resisting a simple casting of positive images of "homosexuality=health=life", making death and life dance together not as binary opposites that finally meet but as co-constitutive dance partners. The club in *Looking,* which is located "below" the mourners, visualizes an underground, subcultural queer space, a space of descent into the shadows of desire, which Dollimore discussed above. The shadows and the unknown, notes hooks, are part of the search for histories and the hidden, as discussed in chapter two (195). Fisher furthermore points out that the night-club scenes and the danger of cruising are "encountered with ambivalence" in the film (65). The characters in the film still seek out dangerous and risky pleasures:

> Forced to express itself under a nocturnal cloak, gay desire finds its pleasures in the scene of the night-club, or in the cemetery where fucking, forbidden as an act of sacrilege, is all the more alluring, not least because of the dangerous equation between eroticism and death. (ibid.)

Hemphill's poem "Where Seed Falls" further captures the pleasures and perils of love which may encounter death. Recited in a rather ominous tone in *Looking*, the poem animates a scene on the streets of what appears to be London where a man from the club walks alone. Eventually two men meet under the night sky in what appears to be a wooded area:

> Stalking./The neighborhood is dangerous/but we go there./We walk the long way./Our jangling keys/mute the sound of our stalking./To be under the sky, above/or below a man/This is our heat./Radiant in the night./[…] We lurk in shadows./We are the hunger of shadows./In the dark/we don't have to say/I love you./The dark swallows it/and sighs like we sigh,/when we rise/from our knees. (Hemphill 153)

Shadows and dark urban spaces punctuate the scenes in *Looking*, linking together death and life.

The complexities of the link between death and life which Julien visualizes may be thought further through discussions of death as liberation itself. Returning again to Dollimore's examination of death and desire in "western culture", Dollimore quotes Foucault who asserts that "'[d]eath is power's limit, the moment that escapes it" ("Promiscuity" 310). In other words, power works though sexuality, death and desire, but power, here, can be curtailed by suicide (ibid.). The links between death and life, death and revolutionary desire or liberation are powerfully articulated by Fanon, who again linked violence to liberation. Fanon's discussion of anti-colonial liberation as a life and death struggle, Hall explains, draws upon the confrontation between the master and slave ("After-life" 28). The slave struggles to death to receive recognition from the master because it is only by risking one's life that the slave is liberated (ibid.). For this reason, Sartre, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, could write the following words on male Algerian freedom fighters: "this new man *begins his life* as a man at the *end of it*; he considers himself as a potential corpse" (italics mine 23). Hall's remarks on the slave's lethal battle with the master is discussed further by Gilroy below who aptly points out that freedom, death and the emancipatory thrust of death ought to be theorized through the standpoints of slaves.

Gilroy furthers a critical re-reading and re-consideration of death against Enlightenment thought by drawing on the slaves' multiple standpoints. Enlightenment thought with its notions of "universality, the fixity of meaning, the coherence of the subject and [...] ethnocentricism" ought to be questioned using the slaves' points of view, because a critique of modernity cannot be completed satisfactorily within its own philosophical and political constructs, that is, immanently, writes Gilroy (*Black* 55-56).

The standpoints of slaves reveal an "ethic of freedom" that parallels modernity's ethic of law, suggests Gilroy, as well they point to new ideas of selfhood and individuation (56). Gilroy examines Fredrick Douglass's work as one example of how a slave's standpoint may be considered in relation to questions of freedom. The fight between Douglass and Edward Coney, his slave breaker, demonstrates what Fanon expressed in chapter one: "The physical struggle is also the occasion on which a liberatory definition of masculinity is produced" (Gilroy, *Black* 63). Gilroy, however, considers the standpoint of a woman slave by drawing on Margaret Garner's murder of her daughter, as recounted in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. Garner fled to Ohio to escape slavery but was caught. In her attempt to deny the slave master's possession of another slave, Garner kills her daughter to keep her from becoming a victim of slavery and slavery's "licentiousness" writes Gilroy (66), alluding to the rape of female slaves. Gilroy raises questions around the gendered differences between the two violent strategies of liberation, but he draws attention to the common references to death as emancipatory made in Douglass's and Garner's narratives (66, 68). In other words, their lives and analyses demonstrate how the standpoints of slaves contribute to a discourse on freedom, that is, freedom is theorized by those who have never experienced freedom (ibid. 68).

Gilroy's consideration of death, liberation and slavery parallels Julien's visualization of the links between life and death, love and liberation. Black cultural productions have dealt with questions of death through stories of loss, exile and journeying, and these narratives serve to bring collectivities together through a consciousness of common points in history and social memory, contends Gilroy (198). The emancipatory thrust of death is articulated through the standpoints of slaves. Similar

to Fanon and Sartre's words in *Wretched of the Earth* and Hall's analysis, the anti-colonial struggle for freedom is a fight till death. According to Fanon, then, colonialism will only come to an end when the colonized fight till death for independence and freedom.

While Julien blurs and links together life and death on multiple levels he also visualizes a comforting presence in the midst of the mourning and grieving that attends death, whether death is considered emancipatory or not. Julien's concern with death, suffering, and loss speaks to Gilroy's point above that these concerns form a common social memory. The significance of Julien's evocation of Hughes and Baldwin extends the question of diaspora: Gates importantly suggests that the two historical figures are evoked for protective purposes (perhaps as "forefathers") against racism, homophobia and AIDS by present-day black gay men against the very threat of AIDS (108). The striking image of an angel in a graveyard holding a large portrait of Hughes and later a portrait of Baldwin can be read as a sort of protective shield. By standing in a graveyard at night, the angel is perhaps calling on the dead Hughes and Baldwin, resurrecting not only their image (which Munoz points out, 65) but their presence as well for protective purposes, as Gates importantly notes. In the context of wars of decolonization, Fanon similarly maintains that past figures seem to be resurrected from the dead to assist freedom fighters in the present (this quote was also cited in chapter two): "The great figures of the colonized people are always those who led the national resistance to invasion. Behanzin, Soundiata, Samory, Abdel Kader—*all spring again to life* with peculiar intensity in the period which comes directly before action" (italics mine, *Wretched* 69). Hooks, however, expresses the impossibility of re-evoking, restoring, or

bringing back the dead when she writes that the search for a black gay male history and the attempts to reclaim figures from burial cannot always be completed (199). This irretrievability marks a loss, writes hooks (195). And this point echoes Walcott's assertion that Julien's work goes against a notion of "history as salvational" because the irretrievability of the "queer Harlem Renaissance", this search for past figures encounters the limits of "memory, history, desire, pleasure and disappointment…" (13). The impossible search for hidden histories of queer sexualities that are themselves concealed is a loss represented by the funeral and opening scene of mourning in *Looking* (hooks, 195). The evocation of Hughes and Baldwin, or more broadly a diasporic history in *Looking,* for protective purposes is fraught with difficulties. The retrieval or reclamation of figures from the dead always marks a loss, or the impossibility of retrieval and in turn, perhaps, the fragility of protection from AIDS.

The limits of retrieval and resurrection mark a loss in *Looking for Langston* and for this reason the importance of mourning or a re-consideration of mourning practices through a possible queer lens in light of the AIDS crisis can be read in the film. In his essay on mourning and photography in *Looking*, Munoz seriously re-examines definitions of mourning in relation to queer lives. Munoz summarizes Freud's definition of mourning and melancholia. Mourning is a process of loss and "letting go", and in this process "an object or abstraction becomes absent and the withdrawal of libido from the object is necessary" (Munoz 63). Melancholia on the other hand is mourning that "does not know when to stop" and it is considered pathological (Munoz 64). Munoz draws from Michael Moon's essay "Memorial Rags, Memorial Rages", however, to relate mourning practices to queer lives. Drawing on Moon, Munoz brings attention to the "'predominantly

privatized, heterosexualized, teleological and "task-oriented" conception of grieving and mourning'" (67). Moon further explains the incompatibility or problems with prevailing conceptions of mourning in relation to queer lives. Analyzing texts by Emerson and Sharon Cameron, Moon contends that mourning is not a process that can be completed (234). Freud submits that grieving and mourning are characterized by "completable tasks, private psychological projects with teleological internal structure", and this requires work which at the completion of mourning restores "'normalcy'" (ibid.). Moon insightfully contends that this linear, task-oriented conception of mourning that restores "normalcy" is impossible, incompatible, unthinkable in relation to queer lives since "queer" is excluded from definitions of normalcy (235). Moon is interested, then, in moving away from Freud's linear model of mourning which focuses on the private and on normalizing practices (ibid.) by considering the work of gay male writers.

Moon considers the work of Walt Whitman and his expression of mourning which, Moon suggests, affirms the eroticism of mourning. Following Michael Bronski's work, Moon writes that mourners should "cultivate actively the erotic component of grief and sorrow" by focusing on "bodily abundance and supplementarity", instead of thinking of death as a rupture in one's erotic relationship as if the dead body were somehow deficient (235-6). Moon is particularly concerned with depathologizing death and bodies especially in light of the images that circulate of people living with AIDS (236). Walt Whitman's *Drum-Taps* poems counter the gruesomeness and pathologization of bodies by describing how the wounded, dying, and dead bodies are cared for, cleansed, caressed, bandaged up and dressed by Whitman himself (Moon 238). Moon identifies these practices as homoerotic exchanges, demonstrating that care-giving can be erotically

charged (238). Shattered skin in Whitman's poetry, writes Moon, also connotes "erotic shatterings" that "one can experience in response to flashes of flesh, the unexpected uncoverings and re-coverings of desired or beloved flesh" (Moon 239). Moon suggests that Whitman's work helps us to rethink our relationship to the dead by moving away from Freud's notion of "displacement and dismemberment (castration)" toward "re-memberment that has repositioned itself among the remnants, the remainders, the reminders that do not go away" (239). The eroticism of mourning and caring for the dead is also described in Hemphill's poem "The Edge", recited in *Looking*, but Hemphill's characterization of mourning is almost a reversal:

> I believed my mission/to be a war zone duty:/don't create casualties,/heal them./*But I was the wounded,/the almost dead,/helping the uninjured.*/Men whose lusty hearts weakened/in the middle of the night,/and brought them to tears,/to their knees/for their former lovers./They could look at me and tell/they did not want to endure/what beauty love scars give me./So touch me now--/Hannibal, Toussaint./I am a revolution without bloodshed./ (italics mine 162-3).

Hemphill considers himself the "almost dead,/helping the uninjured" which is a reversal of Walt Whitman healing the wounded. Again, this points to the need for re-thinking mourning in light of AIDS, which a number of queer writings express.

In a similar vein, Munoz rethinks mourning through another form of queer cultural production: photography. Referring to the photographs included in *Looking for Langston* by Harlem portrait photographer James Van Der Zee, who took photographs during the Harlem Renaissance, and New York portrait photographer Robert Mapplethorpe, Munoz contends that the portrait involves performance, that is, the photographer and subject perform (65). Similarly, the mourner also performs; S/he performs "ritualized gestures and conventions" and this performance of normalized, ritualized conventions of mourning, contends Munoz, links mourning with photography

(ibid.). The portrait captures a lost subject and with "melancholic mourning the object is resurrected and retained" (ibid.). For Munoz, Van Der Zee's and Mapplethorpe's photographs are about mourning and Munoz suggests that Julien's use of their photographs further re-defines mourning practices through queer lives.

Through James Van Der Zee's funeral photographs, which are collected in *The Harlem Book of the Dead*, Munoz argues that Julien re-defines mourning on queer terms. In a number of photographs by Van Der Zee, Munoz notes that the dead are made to look as if they were alive, for example, in one photograph a dead man lies in his coffin with a newspaper – as though he has just dozed off after reading (65-6). This, suggests Munoz, points to Van Der Zee's attempt to bring back the dead through mourning. Working with Barthes's *Camera Lucida*, Munoz furthermore brings attention to life prior to a photograph and points out that Van Der Zee's photographs depict life and death during the "(queer) Harlem Renaissance", and furthermore the photographs later become meaningful to "a generation of black gay men engrossed in the project of excavating deeply buried histories" (67). Julien's use of Van Der Zee's photographs infuses queer mourning into these images by inserting the present self in this past, rupturing heteronormative mourning practices and representations (68). Munoz furthermore notes that Julien forwards collective mourning over, to reiterate Moon's point, the "'predominantly privatized, heterosexulized'" practices of mourning (67). For example, Julien depicts various groups or collectivities of mourners from the fashionable Harlemites depicted at the outset of the film to the angels that look down at the revelry in the club below. The emphasis on *collective* mourning speaks to Alvarez's point that a community is created out of the AIDS crisis, bringing together seemingly disparate

communities such as "[d]rug users, gay, lesbian, poor, middle-class, Latina/os, African-Americans, Native Americans and Asians" (254). The collective aspect of the AIDS crisis collectivizes death and mourning, a feature that Munoz identifies in Julien's *Looking*.

In addition to collectivizing mourning practices by using Van Der Zee's photographs, Julien appropriates Van Der Zee's heternomative images and turns them around to re-define the meaning of death by queering it, and by creating a space for queer mourning for queer folks who died from AIDS. The synopsis for *The Harlem Book of the Dead* states that the book is more than about mourning rites; it represents a past in Harlem's history when "society cared for both the living and the dead, the belief that we must preserve a standard of pride representing order high in spiritual and temporal values". The synopsis continues claiming that "carelessness about death might reflect a carelessness about life" (printed on the cover of the book). The words have a remarkable resonance in an era of AIDS. Again, the dichotomy of death and life is blurred, and the evocation of a "standard of pride" may be read as a call for black queer pride at a time when such lives are devalued in relation to both life and in death. In her introduction to the book, Camille Billops writes that the book contains "two of Death's oldest companions—the portrait artist and the poet": Van Der Zee, as the portrait artist, washes the body and the poetry of Dodson cleanses the soul (1). Queering this scenario, Julien, as an artist who re-stages Van Der Zee's portrait photography, instead beautifies the body (as discussed in chapter one) and Hemphill, as the poet, does not cleanse the soul so much as he complicates its meanings. Again, Hemphill's poem "The Edge" describes both fallen angels and men that rise, moving away from the troubling, binarizing

language of "purity" and "cleanliness". Finally, Van Der Zee's superimposition of angels and biblical scriptures over the images of dead bodies used to remove the gruesomeness of the photographs is re-deployed in *Looking*. Black angels look over and take delight in looking at queer lives below them. The attention and care once given only to the dead who are framed and remembered, in Van Der Zee's book, on heteronormative terms as mothers, fathers, and children, are extended by Julien to include black gay men's lives. Julien's use of Van Der Zee's photographs extends mourning, and an ethics of care and love for lives that are less valued in a heteronormative social order.

Returning to Munoz's analysis of photographs in *Looking for Langston*, Munoz draws attention to the place of Mapplethorpe's photographs and mourning in the film. Although Julien's use of Mapplethorpe's photographs was described in chapter one as a strategy to subvert Mapplethorpe's work, Munoz contends that Julien's representation of black male bodies is commensurate with Mapplethorpe's: both feature "[p]erfectly chiseled black male bodies, framed in striking black-and-white monochromes" (69). Mapplethorpe mentioned in an interview with *Vanity Fair* that most of the men in his photographs are dead because of poverty and limited access to healthcare, insurance and medication, and for this reason Mapplethorpe's photographs become photographs of mourning (Munoz 68, 72). Similar to Bhahba's point about "re-membering", Munoz then writes that communal mourning involves mourning not just an object but several fragmented ones: "mourning Hughes, Baldwin, Mapplethorpe, or the beautiful men in *Black Book* is about mourning for oneself, for one's community, for one's very history" (73). Working against Freud's pathologization of melancholia, Munoz suggests that melancholia involves the reclamation and gathering of history to be mobilized in

collective struggle (74). Both mourning and militancy are needed in AIDS activism, writes Munoz citing Douglas Crimp's essay "Mourning and Militancy", and melancholia is identity-affirming, as well, it provides a space between mourning and militancy (ibid.), perhaps creating a link between the two. Mapplethorpe's photography, like Van Der Zee's, are images of mourning that Julien re-appropriates and transforms for collective mourning purposes, and this in turn affirms the lives of black gay men.

Julien's engagement with questions of death, unlike Fanon's work, opens up a discussion of mourning practices and Julien furthermore demonstrates that mourning is part of the struggle against AIDS. To conclude this discussion of death, I want to repeat Bhabha's point, which in turn draws from Walter Benjamin. Bhabha writes that the colonial state of emergency is always also a state of emergence (41). If we assume that death is part of this colonial state of emergency, where wars of independence claim the lives of several freedom fighters and civilians, then we can also submit that through death there is an emergence. Fanon writes that a new world comes to birth in Algeria through decolonizing struggles and through death:

> on the Algerian soil a new society has come to birth. The men and women of Algeria today resemble neither those of 1930 nor those of 1954, nor yet those of 1957. The old Algeria is dead. All the innocent blood that has flowed onto the national soil has produced a new humanity and no one must fail to recognize this fact. (27-28)

Like Fanon, there is a parallel discussion of emergence in Julien's work. Once again, hooks brings our attention to the emergence of new representations of black gay male lives in *Looking*. For hooks, Julien presents death as a site of resurrection (196) again connoting the resurrection of histories of black gay men, and the queer presence of the Harlem Renaissance that celebrated the beauty of black peoples. The film embraces black gay male subjectivities and visualizes a "desired and desirable black male body and

being" (hooks, ibid.). Though death may seem like an end or ending, it signals a beginning, an emergence, which is possibly why Julien begins his film with Hughes's funeral. As well, this points to Fanon's assertion that decolonization, the emergence of independence, is always a struggle till death.

Endnotes

In the final scene of *Looking for Langston* the once somber mood of the blues filled Wake club is suddenly jolted out of grief and melancholia by a contemporary dance music tune, in which the diva-esque vocals of the song ask "can you feel it?". The dancers are no longer swaying back and forth with their partners in hand. Instead, they spin on the dance floor and some vogue impressively with graceful, suave movements. The mood is celebratory and black gay male lives and identities are affirmed. Julien, however, does not allow this scene to end simply on this positive high note. Again, the thugs and police that aggressively enter the Wake signal the unending homophobia that defuses the celebration of queer identities, lives and spaces. But, with a sigh of relief, the dancers evade the thugs; they have disappeared and are nowhere to be found. This is both a victorious ending (the patrons dodge a homophobic, racist attack) and an unsettling ending to the film (there is always the threat of an attack, and the disappearance of the patrons perhaps may also mark the death of the patrons). And it is here, on this uncertain note (in Julien's work) that is both celebratory and affirming, and unsettling and disturbing, that I would like to end.

The work of decolonization through resistant desire, the work of bridging postcolonial and queer studies and their respective movements and politics, is difficult and rewarding. Confronting looking relations that gender and racialize bodies and reinscribe heteronormative sexuality on such bodies is a difficult undertaking both on the battlefields of independence movements, which Fanon describes, and on the terrain of the AIDS crisis, with which Julien engages. For Julien, the realm of representation is a strategic site for decolonizing struggles. By constructing new representations of black gay

male bodies, Julien questions Fanon's conception of anti-colonial masculinity. Like Fanon, however, Julien identifies the writing of histories as a site of struggle but he questions the construction of histories by employing filmic strategies such as creating a meditation on the Harlem Renaissance, using montage to confront the colonial archive and by employing a diasporic perspective that brings together past and present figures in one filmic, political space. The AIDS epidemic saturates Julien's images, and the backdrop of death in Fanon's work is a haunting portrait of the decolonizing struggle. What Julien offers in this scene of death is a reconceptualization of mourning through a queer lens. For Julien, and others, mourning becomes part of militant action or social activism. The final scene of *Looking*, perhaps much like the work of rethinking any progressive struggle and thought, may be a celebratory, positive scene that works with complexities critically, but this work and the lives that are on the margins always face difficulties and new threats.

With this in mind I turn to Stuart Hall's essay on Fanon. When Hall, referring to the renewed interest in Fanon's work, writes that the practice of re-reading is always a political endeavor ("After-life" 16), I take this point seriously at a time of continued struggle against imperial, colonial domination. At this political conjuncture of the American war against Iraq and the continued colonial occupation of Canada, I read Fanon and Julien with these and other political contexts in mind, perhaps drawing on their work and making connections between them not so much to provide answers, but to speak to these times through their own political moments. The questions that the Bombay Dost workshop raised around the bridging of queer and anti-colonial, counter-neoliberalism movements and politics come to mind here as well. Through Julien's visual poetics and

politics of resistant desire(s) and Fanon's insurgent analyses of colonialism, I imagine then the scene of colonization begin to melt away into a scene of decolonization...

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